

THE EMPIRE ANNUAL FOR GIRLS

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THE EMPIRE ANNUAL FOR BOYS

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THE
Empire Annual
FOR
GIRLS

VOLUME FOURTEEN

Edited by A. L. HAYDON

Including complete stories of school life and adventure,
topical articles on sport and travel, instructive
papers for the practical girl, and
Several Plates in Colour and Black and White



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The "Old Girls'" Prize

And How Nettie Barrasford Won It

BY GRACE PETTMAN

"If only I could win it! If only I could!"

The Sixth Form girls of Carisbrooke College were gathered round the notice-board, reading a type-written paper which the headmistress had just affixed.

"The Old Girls' Association of Carisbrooke College offers a prize of 5 guineas and an equal sum in books, for the best set of answers to questions on the volume, *The Open Door of Modern Literature*, which is down for study by the Sixth Form this term. Three hours will be allowed for answers to the paper of questions which will be set by the headmistress on December 1. The result will be announced on Speech Day, December 15, and the prize awarded."

"If only I could win it!"

Nettie Barrasford's voice was full of wistful longing. For the moment she did not notice that the chatter of her companions had died away and that they had distinctly heard what she had said.

"Yes, don't you wish you may get it?" said Morna Campbell, tossing her curly head disdainfully. "Think of it, girls! Here's a girl new this term, talks about winning the most valuable prize that has ever been offered at Carisbrooke. Talk about cheek!"

The last words were spoken *sotto voce*, and Nettie shrank away abashed.

"You needn't have said that in her hearing, Morna," said kind-hearted Emmeline Wade, who, although fully a year older than the other Sixth Form girls, knew she had no possible chance of winning the prize. "I can't think why it is you are so down on Nettie."

"Can't you, indeed?" and Morna's head was lifted higher than ever; then she lowered her voice so that it could not reach the ears of the new girl, who had crept abashed to the other side of the room. "I haven't told you before, but still, I think it's only right that you should learn. Do you know what Nettie Barrasford's mother is?"

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"Her mother—what do you mean?"

"She's a lodging-house keeper at Margate!" said Morna, with unutterable disdain. "Think of it! A Sixth Form girl at Carisbrooke College, and her mother waiting on lodgers!"

Emmeline looked at her aghast.

"You are quite sure of this? Why, she told us her father was a clergyman!"

"I believe that is true, but he is dead and Mrs. Barrasford keeps a lodging-house on the Fort! Think of it!"

"It must be very hard for her to do that if she's a clergyman's widow," said Emmeline.

"Hard for her! It is hard for us to have to associate with a lodging-house keeper's daughter, I think! Nettie little thought the fact would get round to our ears, but 'murder will out,' you know."

"How did you find out?" cried Winnie Whistler, the school gossip.

"In the queerest way. My sister, Mrs. Septimus Smith"—Morna's golden head was tossed higher than ever—"spent her honeymoon at Margate. It was in the holidays, and, of course, Nettie was at home. My sister motored over to see me yesterday, and she recognised Nettie in the playground. It seems that the person where she lodged had waxed garrulous about her neighbour, saying she was straining every nerve to give her girl a good education, and that she had arranged for her to enter a college next term. Little did my sister imagine that it was Carisbrooke she meant, and that she would be in the same Form as I am!"

"I wonder if the headmistress knows?"

"Oh, Miss Breydon thinks of nothing but brains. She wouldn't look on the matter as we do," said Morna, loftily. "I believe she herself has won her way up to a degree by means of scholarships."

"That would naturally make her more sympathetic with those who have to work hard," said Emmeline. "But I don't see that we have very much cause for complaint; Nettie is a clergyman's daughter—so am I."

"Oh, well, you are always ready to help the 'lame dog,' so we can leave you to her," said Morna, turning away loftily. "I should not have mentioned the matter, only it made me indignant to hear her—a perfectly new girl—talk about winning the Old Girls' Prize. As if such a thing were possible!"

Such a thing was possible, and Morna knew it. Indeed, whatever position Nettie's mother might be obliged to occupy now, whatever struggle she was making for her daughter's sake, it was evident that

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the girl had not only inherited some of her father's brilliant gifts, but that he, before his death, had coached her so successfully that she had been able to enter the Sixth Form straight away and hold her own with the other girls. Morna Campbell had been an easy first last term, but it was patent to everyone that this year she would have to look to her laurels. In some subjects Nettie was not by any means her equal, but in others she displayed remarkable gifts. It was this more than anything else that rankled in Morna Campbell's mind, and the Sixth knew it.

The Open Door of Modern Literature turned out to be a volume which provided a great deal of solid work, even for Sixth Form girls. Everyone in the Form, of course, was entering for the competition, and since the study of the volume had to be undertaken out of the time devoted to the ordinary school routine, the next few weeks were busy ones. Even in the playground the girls of the Sixth could be seen marching about with a fat book under one arm, or sitting in the autumn sunshine poring over the closely printed pages. Sometimes the headmistress began to wonder if the Old Girls had not set their successors in the Sixth an almost impossible task, to which justice could scarcely be done in addition to the routine work of the school.

Those who competed for the Old Girls' Prize worked entirely on their own; no lessons, no explanation or criticism was given by any of the mistresses; indeed, no one of the school staff had anything to do with the matter save the headmistress, who would set the Question Paper when the fateful day came. The excitement during the last few days of November rose to the highest pitch of tension—every spare moment was devoted to the study of *The Open Door of Modern Literature*. Indeed, the headmistress excused the Sixth Form "prep." for almost a whole week, and even then the girls concerned found that the time to fully grasp the subject was short enough.

Nettie Barrasford had settled down to the task without interruption. She knew that her unlucky speech had been considered presumptuous by the Head Girl; but the others had learnt to respect Nettie's gifts, and with them she easily held her own. How much or how little of the contents of the fat volume she had really mastered, no one but Nettie herself really knew. She was working very hard—harder, indeed, than a growing girl of her age had any right to do. No one knew it, but there were nights when Nettie tossed sleeplessly for hours in the long dormitory while the others slumbered in peace—mornings when she rose unrefreshed with a strange, numbed feeling in her head, as if the night's rest had been worse than wasted. When she did sleep it was to dream of possible and impossible questions;

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while famous names in English Literature mixed themselves inexplicably in her confused brain, and anachronisms didn't count! She dreamed that Chaucer was telling Bunyan he had written *Rasselas* in a week; that Macaulay claimed the authorship of *The Faerie Queen*, and Tennyson was disputing with Byron the authorship of the *Canterbury Tales*!

The night before the Exam. came at last. The other girls in her dormitory slumbered as if no such ordeal awaited them on the morrow; but Nettie Barrasford lay wide-awake watching the moonbeams through the slats in the Venetian blinds, and trying to tabulate in her memory all the facts she had striven so hard to acquire.

"Oh, if only I had the least idea what kind of questions Miss Breydon will set!" she said to herself, while her fingers were pressed tight against her throbbing temples. "If only honour did not forbid foreknowledge of the matter, how easy it would be. What would I give to win the prize! The other girls look down on me, but they little know—they little understand. Mother is denying herself everything and working as a clergyman's widow has no right to do, in order to give me a good education. Think what it would mean for me to win that prize—money and books as well! There are some of the girls whom I need not fear as rivals in the least, but Morna—Morna learns so easily, and expresses herself so well! If anyone will win the prize, it is she; and the money would probably be wasted on a bit of jewellery, while the books she would choose would be absolute rubbish. Oh, how hard life is for some of us!"

It was not until she had heard the clock strike the hours of one—two—and three, in slow, monotonous sounds, that Nettie Barrasford fell asleep in sheer exhaustion. Even then she dreamed—dreamed that she was in the headmistress's study, that the fateful questions she was required to answer were before her. She was just going to read them when, in some strange, mysterious fashion, the words faded away before her and she awoke, to find herself not cosily tucked up in bed, but sitting shivering on the edge.

"Why, I must have been walking in my sleep! They told me I used to do it as a child," she said. "How worried mother would be if she knew. Anyway, the Exam. will be over to-morrow; I expect it is that that has been bothering me a bit." And creeping into bed again, strangely chilled and exhausted, Nettie knew no more until the bell for rising sounded. Her head was aching, her eyes were heavy; she knew she was utterly unfit for the extra mental strain that would be involved by the writing of the prize paper.

Tension was at its highest when at ten o'clock the Sixth Form

assembled in their classroom. Paper and pens were ready, and it only remained for the headmistress to come in with the paper of questions. Five minutes passed—ten—fifteen; the girls exchanged wondering glances. Punctual to the minute as a rule, Miss Breydon's delay was inexplicable. When she came in at last her hands were empty, and there was a look upon her face that none of the girls had ever seen before.

"An extraordinary thing has happened!" she said. "I left the paper of questions for the Old Girls' Prize in my private desk in my study last night—they are gone!"

She gazed at the girls before her in searching fashion, but the startled eyes of each girl of the Sixth Form met her look unflinchingly; surprise and horror, but not guilt, was in every face. In all the annals of Carisbrooke College such a thing had never been known.

"I've looked everywhere," said Miss Breydon sternly. "I thought I knew my Sixth Form girls well enough to entrust everything to their honour. No one but the Sixth can possibly be concerned in this matter, and yet I hesitate even to ask the question that is in my mind. Does anyone here know anything about the missing papers?"

There was a chorus of denial, and as she searched each girl's face eagerly, Miss Breydon failed to see any look of self-consciousness that belied the word.

"The Examination, of course, cannot be held," she said quietly. "The Sixth Form will please go immediately into the empty classroom No. 4; and will someone please fetch Miss Mason?"

Wondering just what was at the back of the headmistress's mind, the girls obeyed, and once they were alone in No. 4 classroom they stared at each other with faces of blank dismay.

"What can have happened to the papers? I'm quite sure no girl of the Sixth would demean herself to do such a thing—what does she mean by sending us out of our classroom? It almost looks as though she suspected some one, or guessed where the papers would be found!"

The Sixth Form spent the most uncomfortable quarter of an hour of their lives; but not one of the girls showed any signs of possessing a guilty conscience in the matter. Then Miss Mason, the deputy headmistress, came in suddenly, and her face was set and stern.

"Nettie Barrasford, will you please come with me?" she said.

The other girls gave a little gasp of wonder and surprise. When the door had closed upon her the others drew together and spoke in low, eager whispers.

"What does it mean? What have they found? Can it be possible!"

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"Everything is possible when we are obliged to associate with a lodging-house keeper's daughter!" said Morna, tossing her head. "Personally, I am very glad the real culprit has been found so easily."

"Hush, hush, Morna! You are not sure. The fact that Nettie has been sent for, does not prove that she knows anything of this matter."

"I think——" But the rest of Morna's sentence was cut short by the reappearance of Miss Mason, summoning them back to their classroom.

There stood Nettie Barrasford, white and stricken, beside the headmistress's desk, and Miss Breydon's face was grave and stern. There was real sorrow and concern on her face.

"Such a thing has never happened in Carisbrooke College before," she said quietly, as the girls slipped noiselessly into their places. "I knew only the Sixth had an interest in the matter; that is why I sent you out of the room in order that—with Miss Mason as my witness—I might examine your desks. A sorrowful task for me, and one I have never had to undertake before. The missing examination papers were found in Nettie Barrasford's desk! But she denies all knowledge of the matter. Can anyone throw any light upon it?"

It was evident that the headmistress was puzzled. She had heard enough of Nettie Barrasford before her coming, to believe her to be a girl of high character and sterling principle. That she should have stooped to such an action seemed unthinkable, and there was more of startled horror than conscious guilt in her face when she was shown the missing papers lying in her desk.

"I know nothing about it," she reiterated quietly, when Miss Breydon once more questioned her in front of the girls. "I have no idea what the questions are. I could not tell you one of them. Surely, that is proof sufficient that I did not steal them from your desk and hide them in my own? Oh, Miss Breydon, won't you believe me?"

Sorrowfully the headmistress shook her head.

"In any case the examination must be postponed and a fresh set of questions prepared. Indeed, it is probable that the Old Girls' Prize may not be awarded at all this term. At least the mystery must be cleared up. Instead of working the Prize Paper, the Sixth Form will resume lessons according to the time-table for to-day. Nettie Barrasford, go to my study; I will come to you there."

What passed between mistress and pupil, the others did not know, but Nettie's face was white and stricken with grief when she rejoined her companions later on—only to find herself, as she fully expected, boycotted for the rest of the day. Excitement and indignation ran

high in the school: the record of Carisbrooke College was spoilt; such a thing was unknown in the annals of the school, and Morna Campbell over and over again was heard to declare that expulsion was the only punishment that could be meted out to the offender. It was in vain that Emmeline, the kind-hearted girl who knew she herself stood no chance of winning the coveted prize, insisted that as yet they had no proof.

"There is proof sufficient," Morna said, "the papers are found, and were hidden in Nettie's desk. Besides, we all heard her declare when she first came how she longed to win the prize. Think of it—a new girl! There's no doubt she made up her mind to win it by fair means or foul."

"But why should she take all the papers, when one would have been enough? She must have known she would be found out."

"There is no accounting for what people do when they start doing wrong," said Morna loftily. "She might have known they would be missed, and that she would be found out. I can't understand anyone having the least doubt about her guilt." And she stalked off to the hockey field as if the matter did not merit any further discussion.

It was a very white and stricken Nettie who, finding herself shunned by the others, crept to bed that night and slept in utter exhaustion. Nature exacted its toll and the reaction had come. To-night it was Emmeline who lay awake, worried and anxious; she had seen the haunted look of horror in Nettie's eyes, and guessed that a great deal more than the mere losing or winning of a prize was involved. Nettie's mother was striving to give her daughter an education which would fit her to do some useful work in the world. The events of to-day would prove Nettie's undoing, if she could not clear herself. She would be bound to leave the school and would stand no chance of sitting for the final Exam. which she was working for in common with the rest—an Exam, which might have taken her on to a university had she gained a scholarship.

Emmeline's kindly heart was stabbed to its depths; she could not bring herself to believe that Nettie was guilty. A slight sound disturbed her. All the others in the room were sleeping, so she thought, but in the moonlight she saw a white-robed form gliding silently by her bed. Emmeline raised herself on her elbow and glanced towards the end of the room—Nettie's bed was empty! What did it mean? What further mischief was afoot? Springing up, Emmeline thrust her feet into soft slippers, flung her dressing-gown round her, and followed on tiptoe. Nettie opened the door and glided rather than walked out into the corridor and down the stairs, with a curious halting

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movement as of one who could not see her steps. Emmeline followed, and Nettie glided through the hall into the empty Sixth Form classroom and, sitting down at her desk, opened it, and began rummaging among the papers.

"They say they found it here—it isn't here—it isn't! Oh, mother, it will break your heart! Why do they accuse me?"

She stretched out her arms above her head and stared straight at Emmeline who stood transfixed upon the threshold, but there was no recognition in her eyes. The classroom windows were uncurtained, and in the light of the full moon Emmeline could see a strange, fixed, stony stare on the face of the girl who sat there at her desk.

"She's walking in her sleep!"

Suddenly the truth came to Emmeline like a flash. Turning noiselessly, she fled upstairs and promptly knocked at the headmistress's door. Miss Breydon, too, was wakeful; anxiety and sorrow concerning the mysterious disappearance of the questions had robbed her of her sleep.

"Please, come at once!" whispered Emmeline. "Nettie's downstairs—she's fast asleep—she's gone to her desk! Oh, Miss Breydon, is this the solution of the mystery?"

"Walking in her sleep?"

Like a flash the truth came to Miss Breydon's mind, and bidding Emmeline follow her, she hurried to the deserted classroom and saw for herself the stricken girl sitting at her desk with a stony stare of horror in her eyes, her hands hunting once more vainly for the missing papers.

"I didn't take them—they say they found them here! Oh, mother, mother, will *you* believe it?"

Shutting the desk with a cry of despair, the girl rose unsteadily and went up to her room.

"Go back to bed, Emmeline," whispered Miss Breydon. "I will dress and sit in your dormitory for the rest of the night. Poor Nettie! I think I understand now how it happened."

When dawn broke, Miss Breydon slipped away, and none save Emmeline knew that she had spent the night hours watching the girl somnambulist for fear she should walk in her sleep again. Morning brought explanations, and a few judicious questions elicited from Nettie the fact that she had found herself shivering on the edge of her bed, and had wondered if the old childish habit of walking in her sleep had come back to her again.

"It is quite clear to me now what happened," said the headmistress kindly. "You had been dreaming of the prize paper, and in your

sleep some instinct told you the questions were in my desk, and you fetched them and placed them in your own. You are not responsible, of course ; but, for the sake of satisfying every one, I will write a fresh set of questions and postpone the examination for a few days. You had better go home for the week-end ; I will write to your mother and advise her to let you see a physician who is famous for dealing with cases such as yours."

The rest of the term passed quietly enough. Apparently the treatment of the physician was effectual, for after Nettie returned to school again, she was never known to walk in her sleep. The Examination Day came and went, and the fresh set of questions which Miss Breydon had prepared were duly answered ; then came days of waiting. It was not until Speech Day when one of the Old Girls of Carisbrooke College—now a famous lady doctor—came to distribute the prizes, that the result was announced.

Nettie Barrasford was an easy first, her answers far and away the best of any set sent in ! But, more than even a money prize or the books that would mean so much to her in later years, Nettie valued the kindly smile of congratulation bestowed on her by the headmistress after all was over.

"I am sorry I ever doubted you, Nettie, even for a moment. It was the gladdest day of my life when I solved the mystery. If you had answered the other questions as well as these, the prize would have been yours, in any case."

At the Lyke Wake

A Story of the '45 Rising

BY MAY WYNNE

I

"MALCOLM!"

The girl's voice rose shrill as from behind a clump of fir-trees a young man dressed in the Royalist uniform staggered into view. There was no need for Mary Greystoun to ask questions. One glance at the blood-stained, dishevelled figure with its white face and staring eyes was sufficient. Culloden was lost.

"The Prince?" she whispered—for Prince Charlie had cast his magic spell over Braeburn Towers, as he had elsewhere in his wanderings.

"If I knew, I should not be here," muttered her brother, stumbling forward. "They say he has gained the coast. Pray Heaven he has! Meantime, little sister—it—it is like——" he swayed unsteadily, "to be good-bye," he muttered. "I'm spent—and—and they will be here anon."

His head sank forward on his breast. In a flash the girl understood.

"Courage," she whispered, slipping a strong arm about her brother, "there is the secret closet. You will be safe there."

Even as she spoke her bright eyes swept the moor. On the horizon the sun glittered on burnished steel.

"Oh, come," she moaned. "Quickly! Quickly!"

The young Master of Braeburn pulled himself together with a mighty effort. At nineteen one does not *want* to die, if life can be purchased with honour.

Stumbling, swaying, gasping, he managed to reach the old grey castle which had been "home" to many generations of Greystouns, and of which he was now sole heir and lord. As in a dream he stumbled on, aware presently that another arm was slipped round his

waist on his left side and that his mother's eyes, tear-filled and sorely anxious, gazed into his.

Poor mother! poor sister! He was their all—their darling—their idol—and now—oh! they *must* save him—they *must*! For well they knew the mercy he would get at the hands of the men who rode across the moors to Braeburn Towers.

The gallery at last! They had thought they would never reach it; and beyond was the tiny "powdering closet" of Lady Braeburn herself. It was within this tiny room that the secret of Braeburn Towers lay hidden, for who would suspect an innocent knob of wood at the back of a lady's wardrobe to be the spring which gave entrance to the secret recess behind?

"Safe! Safe!" So sang in glad paeon the hearts of mother and sister as they knelt beside their treasure in the gloom of that secret chamber. He could smile now—faintly, it is true—as they bent over him, asking tenderly concerning his wounds.

"Scratches all," he replied lightly. "Food and sleep will make a man of me again." At nineteen one is so much a man!

It was Mary who fled off on the wings of love to fetch food and wine whilst the mother knelt still, smoothing back the fair, curly hair from the damp brow.

"You are safe here," she kept repeating—for her own comfort perchance, and to lull the throbs of fear as she thought of oncoming riders.

"Click—click." Mary was back again, laden with food enough for half a dozen starving men, but her face was very white.

"They have come," she muttered, "they are dismounting in the courtyard, and oh! there are so many of them and they look so terrible and fierce."

Her brother's hand strayed feebly towards his sword.

"And—and it is I who should be—there to protect ye both," he muttered, "instead of lying here like a coward loon."

But here they checked him, those two whose sole thought was for him and who would have faced all Cumberland's butchers if by so doing they could save him. Even as it was there must be no delay. The Lady of Braeburn must be ready to welcome her guests, since its Master was—absent. The spring clicked faintly behind mother and daughter.

Hunger-pains clamouring loudly to be heard dulled for a time all other thoughts past, present and future in the mind of the Master of Braeburn. In the dim darkness he lay eating and drinking as only a ravenous youth can, and when the meal was finished he lay back

with a sigh of content. The blackness of despair had vanished with emptiness and faintness ; though Culloden was lost and his hero flying for his life, Malcolm Greystoun could paint rosy pictures from Hope's colour box of the future, and—thus painting the triumph of a second Restoration—fell asleep.

Click ! Click ! What sound was that which awoke him so summarily ? Where was he ? What had chanced ? No sentry's challenge had rung out—no—— His hand strayed vaguely over the floor, whilst he wondered at not feeling the springy freshness of the heather which had been his bed these many nights.

"Malcolm !"

In an instant he remembered all, and called back a whispered reply.

"Mollie !"

A faint rustle and the dim outline of a girlish figure stooping above him.

Malcolm sat up abruptly.

"What ! Crying ! — little Mollie," he exclaimed. "Those soldiers——"

"Sh—sh—sh," she whispered, "not so loud. They vow you are here, and the sentries are posted at every point. You could not escape——"

"I am content here for the present, Mollie. Macnaughten's men can't stay here for ever."

"No."

"Then, why these tears ?"

"Oh, Malcolm, how can I tell you ? Yet I must—I must ! They say—we heard them, though they little guessed our presence—they say they know where the Prince lies hid—in a hut not five miles hence—you know it well—the one they say old Isobel Gowdie the witch-woman lived in—and . . . and he has but one lad with him. To-night twenty troopers ride to take him and perhaps others too—oh ! Malcolm, if I could but ride thither but . . . but it is impossible for so much as a mouse to leave the Castle unseen. And . . . and they ride at midnight."

Silence in that dark closet, silence only broken by a man's heavy breathing—for he was a man now, this Master of Braeburn who crouched there with the blood throbbing in every pulse and surging tumultuously in his brain.

The Prince taken ! The Prince taken ! And—and—— The young man shuddered, reading the ghastly sequel in the enshrouding gloom. And he, Malcolm Greystoun, Master of Braeburn, was the only one who could save him. Silently this Master of Braeburn

registered a vow. If Charles Stuart were to die, one, Malcolm Greystoun, would not be alive to call curses on his murderers.

Mary was weeping beside her brother. "Alas, alas," she sobbed, "we cannot save him."

Malcolm laid a firm hand on her arm. "Mary," he muttered, "we can save him—you and I—yes! *you* and I—together. You'll do all I ask, Mollie?"

But the girl shrank back with a low cry.

"Oh, Malcolm, Malcolm, not you too," she moaned. "There's no saving him, laddie. You don't know—there are soldiers everywhere. Even without, in the gallery, you couldn't take a step from this closet before you would be arrested and——" she shuddered.

"Yet to-night sees me at Isobel Gowdie's hut," replied Malcolm Greystoun and drew her down to the level of his lips.

Long and low they talked together, that boy and girl who held a royal life, as it were, in their hands; and Mary spoke no more of refusals, since even in the darkness love sees far and she knew her brother's heart, knew too that the Prince must come first with both, since many months ago they had vowed themselves to his service—since even maids can serve at times.

So, presently, she went forth tip-toeing from that secret hiding-place, and if her cheeks were white her eyes were bright.

In the darkness behind, the Master of Braeburn was on his knees.

"It'll be his death, child, 'twill be his death! Mary, Mary, why did ye tell him?"

It was Lady Braeburn who spoke, but her daughter faced her bravely.

"He'd have died of heart-break and cursed us with his last breath," she retorted firmly. "There was need to tell the—truth, mother," and she went her way with head erect and lips firm.

II

Colonel Macnaughten was smiling. Things went well for His Majesty at St. James's, and rebel-hunting has its charms—for some. Above all, the thought of the rebel who would be found in a witch-woman's hut was sweet.

A cry of horror ringing along one of the upper passages set all on the alert.

"How now?" growled the Colonel savagely. After supper one likes one's rest and pleasant dreams undisturbed.

At the Lyke Wake

Explanations, somewhat disjointed in truth—were forthcoming from all sides—soldiers of King George and servitors of Braeburn Towers alike being eager with the news. It was one Sandy Andrews, a faithful steward of the house, who had died three days since and who was being diligently “waked” by sorrowing friends and relations in one of the rooms above, by permission of Lady Braeburn herself.

The “wake” had promised to be a most satisfactory entertainment and soother of grief to all concerned, but Fate and a jealous underling had decreed otherwise. This underling, who, it appeared, liked the defunct Sandy as little in death as in life, had determined to have a tardy revenge, and thus, whilst the weeping friends were viewing the “beauties” of the corpse, this dastardly avenger had crept to the door and *set it ajar*, thereby destroying his defunct enemy’s chances of unending rest.¹

Too late the deed was seen, with the result that the mourners had fled precipitately, only stopping to snatch at funeral cakes and wines which the bounty of the Lady of Braeburn had provided.

And now, as the tale spread, the fear spread with it, and even the soldiers of King George looked askance at each other, clustering together in nervous fear in spite of their Colonel’s snort of contempt, as he turned from such idle gossip to accept the smiling invitation of Mistress Mary Greystoun to join her and her mother in the with-drawing room.

It wanted four hours to midnight.

The sentries stood at their posts before every door in Braeburn Towers, but—the Colonel’s eye being withdrawn from them—they did occasionally cross from one to the other to talk in whispers of the story of Sandy Andrews.

The passages—above all, the long gallery of Braeburn Towers—were dark—save for a faint moonlight. Was it moonlight yonder? That patch of white which seemed to flicker and wander—uncertainly at first and yet growing longer—clearer—more defined in shape to the watching eyes at the farther end of the gallery.

John Ferguson, sweating and mumbling, stood staring at it, asking himself the same question. Moonlight! Moonlight! No, indeed; no moonlight that, but a tall figure, swathed and bound in white grave-clothes, with face hidden by a cloth through which eyes seemed to glare, burning into the very soul of Trooper Ferguson.

¹ An ancient superstition still held in parts of Scotland, that if the door of a room where a corpse was laid out was left ajar, the ghost of the dead man would immediately walk in visible form.

The worthy soldier of King George felt the sweat pour from his face. Yet he stood his ground. Nearer—nearer—very swiftly—glided the terrible figure. Surely no living thing could move, as *this* moved—this eerie, awful *thing*, which could be no other than the cruelly-aroused ghost of one Sandy Andrews?

Trooper Ferguson looked again. Soon the spectre would be—would be—— He did not finish the sentence. For the first time in his life Trooper Ferguson fled before the enemy.

Still the strange figure advanced, gliding onwards—swiftly, more swiftly; and before it fled Trooper Ferguson proclaiming its coming in shrill tones of horror. The ghost of Sandy Andrews was routing a regiment of picked men without striking a blow.

In the with-drawing room below Colonel Macnaughten was listening with pleasurable enjoyment to the sweet singing of Mistress Mary Greystoun. The howls of his discomfited soldiers did not reach him. The ghost of Sandy Andrews evidently panted for fresh air.

A sensible wish that! A good wish! The in-dwellers of Braeburn Towers would be well rid of him; not only the soldiers of King George, but the fellow-servants of Sandy himself seemed anxious for his final exit.

An open door—a cool breeze blowing in—outside a faint moonlight and darkness beyond. Darkness and the horses of the soldiers of King George. The ghost of Sandy Andrews did not pause, did not stumble—did not look to right or left. Straight—so the thrilling whispers of terror-stricken menials averred—from the chamber of death to——

The great door which had been set wide open clanged to with a crash. Half a dozen strong arms had been ready to swing it back on its hinges, shutting out the sight of that ghostly terrible form. From without came a howl of fear—a shout—a—was it a pistol shot?—could John Kennedy have been daring enough to fire on a—on a wandering wraith?

They were staring at each other, those nerve-shaken men and women in the hall of Braeburn Towers, when Colonel Macnaughten's voice was heard calling loudly from the threshold of the inner room for an explanation of the sounds which had reached him at last.

Sergeant Baines wiped his brow as he staggered forward. After all, the Colonel just then was almost as ill to face as the wraith of a defunct Jacobite butler. The Lady of Braeburn's hand was locked in that of her daughter's, as they stood a little behind their uninvited guest.

And through the night—across the wild moors, over hill and down dale—rode a strange, uncanny horseman, with white garments streaming behind him as he raced for life and death—for Prince and honour—towards the hut of Isobel Gowdie the witch-woman.

At the Lyke Wake

The sergeant's tale was told at length. And the storm had broken. That discreet and well-mannered gentleman and soldier, Colonel Hugh Macnaughten was giving vent to his feelings, wholly oblivious to the fact that two ladies stood behind him—yet, curiously enough, the ladies showed no anger at such lack of respect. They were smiling into each other's eyes.

"Boot and saddle, boot and saddle!" roared the Colonel. "We ride for the hut without an instant's delay."

And again his language was more strong than polite. But Mary Greystoun was smiling.

There were no laggards where Colonel Macnaughten commanded. Within five minutes torches were flaring and men were running quickly towards the courtyard. On their way they passed the spot where John Kennedy had fired at the wraith of Sandy Andrews. It was John Kennedy who lay there himself, however, with a bullet—not of ghostly fabric—through his temple. There were more now to curse their own folly besides Colonel Macnaughten.

Within the old grey-turreted house Mary Greystoun clung round her mother's neck.

"He is safe, he is safe," she sobbed joyously.

"The courtyard gate is open—there'll not be a horse to carry them over the moors to-night."

As she spoke a clamour arose without. Shouts, furious curses, yells of rage rose on the air. The courtyard was empty—and beyond lay the darkness of the moors.

In a little hut not five miles away Malcolm Greystoun knelt before a young man, dressed in female attire, who had risen from a couch of dried bracken at his entrance.

"So," said Prince Charlie, with a smile which defeat and misfortune had not robbed of its sweetness, "there are still faithful hearts in Scotland." And he rested his thin hand on Malcolm's dark head.

A boy's slim figure stood in the doorway.

"The horses are here, Prince," whispered a gentle voice.

The Master of Braeburn rose and bowed to Flora Macdonald.

"We go together," said he, and thus rode those three into the night.

It was the Master of Braeburn alone who returned to Scotland in later years. There were two who waited to welcome him in the old grey-turreted home. But the story is told still to other generations of the Lyke Wake of Sandy Andrews, and how his wraith routed the soldiers of King George.

Why not Art as a Career?

What Girls may do with Brush, Pen and Pencil

BY HILDA COWHAM-LANDER

(*The Well-known "Black and White" Artist*)

THOUGH this short talk for would-be artists perhaps concerns girls most, so far as the magazine for which it is written can be regarded, yet what I shall say may serve almost as well for boys who have any gift for drawing and desire to exercise it for some financial reward.

First of all, make sure of two things, viz. that you *have* a really superior talent for drawing, with a certain amount of initiative at the business; and next, that you are prepared to undergo very hard study and practice, unremitting effort to succeed, and much damping down of your enthusiasm and hopes by non-recognition and non-acceptance (for a time at least) of your best work. For these set-backs come to all who aim at great things, who have to fight their own way onward, and who start on any new or untried line of work.

Let us suppose, however, that you and those guiding you feel sure you have special abilities for drawing, and that you have shown some originality in your designs, ideas, and sketches. Then, on leaving the ordinary elementary or secondary school, you must join an Art School in your town, or one as near it as possible, for day or evening instruction in drawing. But see that it is a really good school, whose teachers take a sound interest in their work, and also in that of their pupils, and who are truly competent to direct and teach those under their care. Far too many so-called Art teachers at small local schools are not!

When thus studying in drawing-classes at the Art School, I should earnestly advise you also to take other classes in some craft which is intimately connected with drawing. Such as Lithography, Design, Printing, Etching, etc.; so that you, whether girl or boy, may have a second trade, so to speak, at your fingers' ends, one which, if you continue later on as an artist, will prove immensely useful; and which,

if you do not succeed well as a painter or sketcher, may yet become a business for you in itself.

There is always a decent job waiting for the girl who does as I have advised and makes good in her work. Only the other day I myself—who took up lithography in the way indicated—was offered a fine position as a lithographer by one whom I had not known up to then. He proposed to give me quite a good salary if I would agree to go. But I did not accept. Yet this shows what chances afterwards come the way of the girl who proceeds rightly when learning.

When you have been at the local Art School for one or two years, and begin to feel that you have learned as much as the teachers there can reasonably give you, then consult with your parents or friends (taking also the local teachers' counsel in the matter), as to whether you should not proceed to some excellent Art School in London. There will usually be higher tuition, more opportunity, and a wider outlook in such a great London establishment than in a provincial one. Moreover, which is very important, you and your work will probably be brought more into touch with, and more to the notice of, people who can find you employment or jobs later on, if you are in London or near it. Such a school as that in Southampton Row would do admirably for this phase of your study, but there are many others equally excellent.

Just at present, it seems to me, there is a great future for girls who can draw "Fashion" work supremely well, and with, in certain cases, some originality. The present tendency is for this part of artistic work to widen out, and those who can do what is needed in it will not lack reward.

Another excellent opening lies in poster-drawing, where the field is not only unlimited in scope, but where the actual labourers who have made any real mark at the job still remain very limited in number. If I were to name here what some girl-artists are earning, who have made their name and fame in this branch of artistic work, you would scarcely believe me, and would indeed hardly think it possible for girls of their age to receive such large sums annually for their clever, though arduous, labours.

But recollect, in all this, that you must learn to draw well, and keep on learning to draw well, and continue to draw well, and practise to be as perfect as possible in drawing. For this is the very foundation of all success. The girl who fancies she has learned everything that is to be known about drawing in itself, whether she be fifteen or fifty, will never prove an outstanding figure in her own special line of Art, whatever that may be.

Many times have girls asked me whether there is a good opening for caricature-drawings in papers, etc. I have, of course, always replied in the affirmative—but that caricature is a very rare gift and art, possessed only by one man or woman in a million, even if as much as that! It needs special talents, very rare ideas and understanding, and a grasp of the subject in some novel and strikingly popular light, for a girl to do much in this way.

There are better teachers, and more efficient help, at present for all who desire to work hard and make a name than ever there were before, of that I feel quite sure. But I would again repeat my earnest warning that girls wishing to make a living from their abilities to draw must not expect to do so, except in very rare channels, from merely sketching pictures and painting in oils or water-colours. If you are a Beatrice Offord, and can make your fine talents felt in an uncommon line, well and good. If not, you had better leave that sort of work alone, and devote your ability to more paying ones.

I fancy it would be correct to say that even an artist such as Augustus John does far better from his skill as an etcher than from actual portrait-painting; and the same may be said of many famous artists—men and women—whose names are always connected by the general public with fine paintings which have graced the walls of the Royal Academy or noted galleries. It isn't always the most glowing pictures which prove most financially helpful to an artist!

Of course, for you to get a start and show people what you have studied and done, it is well for a beginner to obtain the Art certificates which show one's honourable record in this way. But, for myself, I am no believer much in certificates, and I do not think that girls should stay too long at Art schools trying to win them.

Rather, when a girl decides to leave the Art School, and wants to begin to earn money, let her take round her drawings and ideas to editors, advertisers, agents, and those who buy, and learn from stern and solid experience what is wanted and what isn't; what buyers like, and what they don't; what sort of work is profitable and what is useless. An ounce of fact is worth a ton of precept; and a girl who means to get on will soon begin to "cut her coat according to her cloth" in this style.

She must not expect editors to fall into raptures at once, or to offer her fancy prices. Lucky she, if they offer her any price at all for her work on her first visit to their dens! But let her not be disheartened, for real good work will sooner or later make its way; and as her connection extends with those who buy, and they get to know herself better, orders and purchases will gradually follow.

But the wise girl will now see why it is best to live at home, and to have her parents' support and help for a time after she leaves the Art School, whilst she is getting together this connection which shall enable her to keep herself in years to come.

May I add, in conclusion, that I think the future, too, will bring forth fine openings for the artistic girl who has the talent for designing cretonnes, chintzes, wall-papers, and so on? Also for her who makes herself proficient in the art of home-decoration, in designing ornamentation for rooms, and artistic furniture for those who can have such specially made? Big firms have not yet, as a rule, taken girls with these talents into their employ, but I fancy the time is coming when they will do so in quite decent numbers.

The great thing for every girl to do is to continue her practice at actual drawing, and not to be easily cast down by temporary failure; also to have somebody—parent or other relative—on whom she can rely for help and support till she has made some kind of name for herself at her particular kind of work.

“ Sister ”

An Eye-opener for the Third Form

BY DORIS A. POCKOCK

OF course—there could be no question about that—the Third Form was a peculiarly difficult and trying one for a new mistress to have to tackle. For, in the first place, it happened to be largely composed of the madcaps of the Middle School—lively scatterbrains of twelve to fourteen, at once too big to be coerced as easily as the dots in the lowest Forms and too childish to have the sense of the seniors; and in the second place the last Third Form mistress, Miss Poulter, had been at the same time so popular that her ex-pupils would have regarded almost any other mistress as a painful contrast, and so easy-going as to have let them get completely out of hand. To make matters even worse, the members of the class were, in common with the school in general, feeling thoroughly over-excited and “above themselves” just then.

For it was the beginning of the Easter Term of 1919, and the Third Formers were just back from what had been, for most of them, the most wonderful Christmas holidays they had ever known—the first peaceful Christmas since the war. Many of them had had fathers, brothers or other relatives coming gloriously back “on leave” or for good; most of them had had their very considerable share of the general festivities and rejoicings; and none of them felt in the least inclined to settle down to ordinary routine, which Peggy Forester defined as “stuffy stodge.”

She, Peggy, was feeling especially exhilarated, for not only had her beloved “Daddy,” and all three soldier-brothers, come safely back from various Fronts, but the eldest brother, Peter, her own particular chum, had, shortly before the climax of the war, been awarded the V.C. for conspicuous gallantry in rescuing wounded under heavy fire. Peggy, who had been up to London with him for the Investiture at Buckingham Palace, and had found herself, both at school and at

Christmas parties, a kind of interesting heroine-by-proxy as a V.C.'s sister, had come back to St. Hilary's in a condition of having her fluffy head, always of the feathery variety, completely turned. It was quite natural, but it was also rather unfortunate, because Peggy even at the best of times was the most incorrigible madcap in the Third Form and its ringleader in mischief; and it was most especially unfortunate for the new mistress, Miss Gray, who at that critical juncture arrived to take Miss Poulter's place.

She fell foul of Peggy the very first morning, at breakfast. It happened that Peggy had slightly cut her finger with the bread-knife, and was making rather a commotion about it (though less, it should in justice be added, on account of the smart than because the sight of blood always frightened her), and the new mistress had come to the rescue and bound up the finger with the expertness of a trained V.A.D.; but she had also been a little too bright and bracing about it—in fact, *so* bright and *so* bracing that she had as good as said, "Don't make such a fuss about nothing!"—and Peggy, who was spoilt, and accustomed to being cossetted, had been deeply and direfully offended.

The other Third Formers, who rather idolised Peggy and were naturally on the look-out for short-comings on the part of a new mistress, sympathised warmly with what they considered their favourite's wrongs; the subject was discussed hotly all day, and even when bed-time came had been by no means thrashed out.

"It was a frightful shame," Peggy grumbled, from her pillow, to the dormitory at large, "trying to make out that I was a coward; why, at home, even *Peter* is always decent about it if I hurt myself—and surely a V.C. wouldn't be likely to stand my being fussy, if I really were!" "Rather not!" chorused the dormitory, unaware that Peter Forester, V.C., who was an exceedingly nice person, not only adored his little only sister but spoilt her atrociously, a fact which Peggy enjoyed more than she realised it.

"But she didn't exactly make out you were cowardly, you know, Peggy," Norah Reeve ventured to say, trying to soothe the victim.

"Yes, she did!" Peggy insisted—"didn't you hear her say, 'Just think what the soldiers have to stand!'"

"But she couldn't expect a girl to be as brave as a soldier," said Norah pacifically; but her attempts to throw oil on troubled waters were ill-fated, for Peggy resented this well-meant remark as an aspersion on her sex. "Why not?" she retorted sharply. "Lots of women are. Why, Peter always says what that Sister at the V.A.D. hospital did for him was as brave as anything he saw all through the war!"

"Tell us the story, Peg!" the dormitory clamoured—for although

they had heard it about a dozen times already, its popularity was by no means diminished on that account.

Peggy, who loved narrating, took up the tale. “Well, you know——” she began.

At that point a bell was heard which was the signal for “Silence and lights out”; but although Dolly Rackham obediently switched off the light, Peggy went on, as though the “silence” rule did not exist: “It was when Peter was wounded, on the Somme, and sent to a V.A.D. hospital in Blighty. It was in London, and one night there was a most awful air-raid, and the hospital was being shelled like anything. They managed to get the more slightly wounded out of the wards and into shelter, but Peter was awfully bad, poor old boy, and so were one or two others, and they simply couldn’t be moved; so a doctor and a man-orderly stayed to carry on, and the nurses were ordered to get to shelter. But this girl—this special Sister—simply wouldn’t go!” A thrill got into Peggy’s voice, and she raised it unwarily in her excitement. “They couldn’t make her leave, and she just stuck it out, and stayed by dear old Peter and went quietly on with her nursing as though nothing were happening, until at last a shell burst fairly in the ward. Even then, Peter said, the Sister simply didn’t turn a hair! She just smiled at him, and said, joking, ‘Where did *that* one go to?’—quoting Bairnsfather, you know—to buck him up; and it was not until hours afterwards, when the daylight came and showed how her sleeve was all stained, that they found she’d been hit by a splinter of the shell and carrying on while wounded! She got a medal for it, and if it wasn’t just the finest thing altogether——”

The door opened suddenly. “Girls,” said the voice of Miss Gray at the doorway, “you know what the rules say, no more talking after lights out.”

“Sorry, Miss Gray,” mumbled Peggy, a little sulkily; but Pamela, alias “Fluff,” Summers, jumped out of bed and ran to the new mistress. She was a dimpled, coaxing, captivating little person, was Fluff, and few governesses could withstand her and her pretty, babyish ways. “Oh, Miss Gray,” she cried, “you must make big ‘xcuses for us, because Peggy Forester was telling us such a frightfully thrilly story! And it’s all true”—and she burst out with an excited second edition of Peggy’s story.

“Wasn’t it simply splendid, Miss Gray?” the dormitory commented.

And then it was that Miss Gray said what seemed to her scandalised auditors worse than the worst they could have expected of a new mistress, and put the seal on her own unpopularity. “Well, I don’t know,” she responded coolly. “Really, I don’t see very much

in it. I mean, of course, at such times every one has to do her best, and a nurse would naturally try to stick to her post just as a man would." Then, adding, "No more talking, remember," she left the room.

But she left wrath and disgust behind her. "The—the *beast*!" Peggy hissed in an infuriated stage-whisper. "Fancy her daring to try to run down what even Peter—a real V.C.—thought was splendid! Wonder what *she* did in the war? Stayed at home and slacked, I expect—she *would*!—and now pooh-poohs what that brave V.A.D. girl did!"

"Isn't it rotten," Margery Hilton murmured, "having a new mistress like that stuck over us?"

There came a wicked chuckle from Peggy's bed. "Rotten," she agreed in a stage-whisper, "but I don't fancy it's going to be awfully jolly for *her*, either!"

And certainly, next day, the Third Formers, headed by Peggy, did their level best to ensure their unpopular new mistress's post being no bed of roses. If ever a class of little girls made themselves a "handful," the Third Form managed to do so that day! Miss Gray was young and energetic and had a sound idea of discipline, but all the same she found them almost more than she could cope with; and as for Peggy Forester, that impish madcap seemed to the new mistress a veritable Spirit of Mischief.

The climax came at last, when Peggy, sent to fetch a dictionary, returned staggering under the weight of a huge pile of encyclopedias, and "accidentally" let them fall, with a terrific clatter, over Miss Gray's desk; whereat the new mistress' sorely-tried patience gave way.

"Margaret Forester," she said sharply, "for that and all your other naughtiness of this morning, you will stay in this afternoon and write me out an imposition."

"This afternoon!" Peggy gasped. "Oh, but, Miss Gray, I can't—it's the soldiers' procession day!"

"She can't, really, Miss Gray!" Dolly Rackham put in, sure that the new mistress could not understand. "You see, there's going to be a kind of fête to-day at the Town Hall for returned local soldiers, and they'll march there in a procession with a band, and we're all going to see it—the whole school."

For a moment Miss Gray hesitated, not wishing the punishment to be in excess of the crime; but she was new to school-mistressing, and painfully conscious that she *must* enforce discipline. "Margaret should have thought of that before she misbehaved herself," she said firmly. "I am sorry for her disappointment, but she has brought it on herself."

A kind of gasp went round the Form. How dared she—this upstart new mistress—try to tyrannise over them in this way? A soldiers' fête in the town—all the school going—and Peggy, a V.C.'s sister, not to be there!

“She *must* go, Miss Gray!” cried Margery Hilton indignantly. “It wouldn't be patriotic not to!”

“Oh! but Miss Gray wouldn't care about that, Margery,” Peggy put in rudely. “You remember, last night, she let us know how much she cared about V.A.D's., so of course she wouldn't understand *our* caring about *soldiers*!”

“Margaret,” said Miss Gray icily, “I do not wish to have to lengthen your imposition for impertinence!”

“What shall you *do* about it, Peggy?” Myra Fanshaw sympathised, when the class was over. “Appeal to Miss Winter, or——”

“Do about it?” Peggy retorted, tossing her head. “I shall jolly well take the law into my own hands, and *go*!”

“Do you mean——?” gasped the admiring Myra.

“I mean that I simply don't intend to let any horrid, unpatriotic person like Miss Gray do me out of helping to welcome the soldiers!” Peggy retorted with as much dignity as though she were proposing to show her own patriotism in the noblest possible manner. “If I slip out of the window and go the long way round to the town, I'm not likely to meet any of the school.” And accordingly, that afternoon, when the rest of the school were setting off for their festivities, the victim of the new mistress's “tyranny” retired to the schoolroom, ostensibly for her appointed task of imposition-writing; but hardly had the mistress whose duty it was to see unlucky culprits established in the detention room made her exit by the door, than Peggy made hers by the window, crept cautiously through the garden, effected her escape by the side gate, hurried along under cover of the hedge—and, turning into the lane which was the roundabout way to the town, came face to face with the school “crocodile” of merrymakers, accompanied by Miss Fisher, a Senior school mistress, and Miss Gray.

It was a sensible edict of Miss Fisher's that the school should go by the longer and quieter route, instead of along the high-road in the dust of the many motors thronging to the procession, as Peggy had counted upon their doing, which had worked the disaster. There was no possibility of concealment. The intensely sympathetic “crocodile” came to a startled halt, and Peggy, feeling that the game was up, did ditto.

“Margaret,” said Miss Gray sternly, “what are you doing here?”

Evasion was so evidently useless that Peggy did not attempt it. "I was—going to see the procession!" she blurted out, and awaited Nemesis.

"Against my orders——" Miss Gray began, but "Fluff" darted forward. "Oh, Miss Gray, do let her off and say she may come!" she begged. "Peggy *ought* to be mixed up in anything to do with soldiers, 'cos she's sister to a real V.C.—Captain Peter Forester, V.C.!"

"I know," said Miss Gray quietly, "and therefore she should know how to obey like a soldier. Go on, girls. Margaret, come back with me."

"I can get out again as soon as she's gone!" thought wilful Peggy, as Miss Gray marshalled her back to the schoolroom. She found to her dismay, however, that the new mistress had no further intention of leaving her to her own devices, for she took off her hat and settled down to some writing in the schoolroom—and Peggy realised that her plan of escape was frustrated.

"Shan't you even bother to go and see the soldiers, Miss Gray?" she asked, with scorn, fully intended for impertinence, in her voice. "Don't you want to?"

"Very much," replied the new mistress quietly, "but I am afraid I cannot do so."

That implied, "Since you are not to be trusted," and a nice impulse nearly moved Peggy to reply, "Go, and leave me here; I promise to stay." The words, which would have made the peace, were on the tip of her tongue—but they remained unspoken, as another more impish thought flashed into her mind. She said no more, but began to write with great industry; but, had Miss Gray known it, it was not only her imposition which Peggy was writing.

"Poor old Peg! You missed a lot—it was ripping! What a shame!" the Third Formers sympathised on their return; but Peggy was unexpectedly jubilant.

"Never mind," she retorted—"if she stopped me from going, I stopped *her* too; and I mean to pay her out anyway. Look here—I wrote it while she thought I was doing my impot.!" and she proudly displayed a paper on which was written: "Vote of Sensure: We the undersigned feel it our duty as Patriots to pass a Vote of Sensure on Miss Gray for being so unpatriotic as to (1) try to run down that splendid V.A.D. Sister; (2) prevent Peggy Forester, a V.C.'s sister from going to see the soldiers; (3) not troubling to go and help welcome them herself. This is a patriotic school, and we object to having a new mistress who isn't."

"I wish I were sure that's how you spell 'censure,'" Peggy commented, "but if we all sign it and give it to her——"

“ It wouldn’t do any good. It won’t make her resign or anything. She might even laugh at us,” Norah objected, with a gloomy knowledge of the ways of grown-ups.

“ No, it won’t make her resign,” Peggy admitted, “ but it’s bound to make her jolly mad ! *Nobody* could like, in victory-time, to be told she’s unpatriotic and like a pro-German. Look here, I’ll give it to her—there ! All you’ve got to do is to sign it.”

With some difficulty—for the bit of mischief suggested was more than ordinarily daring, even for them—she prevailed upon the Third Form to append their signatures ; but when it came to the point of actually handing the insulting document to the new mistress, Peggy’s own courage failed slightly, and she decided that it would be “ every bit as good ” merely to leave the paper where its victim would be sure to find it.

Accordingly, with the “ Vote of Sensure ” in her hand, she tiptoed into Miss Gray’s bedroom, and there faced a difficulty. “ If I leave it lying about,” she thought, “ somebody else—a servant or someone—might see it first ; inside a drawer, perhaps——”

She opened a corner drawer, and saw lying there a small leather case. Her eyes gleamed. “ That’s just the thing ! ” she thought. “ Inside the watch-case—nobody else would look there, but *she’s* bound to open it to wind up her watch,” and she opened the case to slip in the paper, and found within not a watch, but a medal.

Of what kind, she knew at once ; for Peter Forester had described to Peggy what the different war decorations were like, and there was no chance of her being mistaken in this particular one. But how had it come into Miss Gray’s possession ? Wonderingly, she took up the case, and saw lying beneath it a photograph of a young officer and a girl in the uniform of a V.A.D.

Now, Miss Gray was extremely good-looking, in a rather peculiar way ; her features were very striking ; and they were unquestionably the features of the young nurse in the photograph. And the man beside her——

The man ! Peggy could have recognised *that* likeness among a hundred.

“ *Peter !* ” she gasped. “ I know it is—Peter and Miss Gray—together—and she’s a nurse. And the medal——”

Wild suppositions flashed through her mind, and she was too much startled to remember that she had no right to pry into Miss Gray’s belongings, until she suddenly heard the new mistress’s voice beside her : “ Margaret ! what are you doing ? ”

“ Miss Gray ! ” Peggy gasped, snatching up the photograph. “ What *does* this mean ? That—that’s *Peter !* Peter and you ! ”

Miss Gray put her hand on the excited child's shoulder. “Yes, dear,” she said quietly, “that is your brother. I—know him very well. I would have let you know before, only Peter—that is—Captain Forester—and I wanted to surprise you. We planned, when I took this post at your school after being demobilised, that I should first make friends with his little sister and then tell her, and—well, we have not become very good friends yet, have we?” she concluded, quaintly and a little wistfully.

But Peggy was too excited to heed. “Then—then, you *were* a V.A.D. yourself in the war!” she stammered, “and this medal—oh, Miss Gray! you didn't win it by—by *being* the Sister I told the girls about that night you caught us talking? It wasn't *you*?”

Miss Gray blushed. “Oh! it was nothing, dear,” she said hastily. “I just had to do my best, that was all—as I said.”

“Then, it *was* you!” Peggy gasped. Realisation came rushing in upon her. “Oh, Miss Gray!” she wailed, “what idiots—what perfect *pigs*—we've all been! Of *course* you couldn't praise up the V.A.D. girl when it was you yourself—and of *course* you thought I made a fuss about my finger when you'd nursed the wounded, and of *course* you wanted me to ‘obey like a soldier’—and I'd wanted so to know Peter's splendid ‘Sister,’ and never guessed it was *you*! And we've simply plagued you all the time, and thought you were unpatriotic—*you*!—and said so.” The “Vote of Sensure” seemed to burn in her pocket. “Miss Gray,” she blurted out, her face crimson, “I went to your drawer to—to put a paper there—from all of us—and now you must never see it, *never*!” and she desperately tore the “Vote of Sensure” from top to bottom.

The situation was agonising; but Miss Gray understood. “Very well, Peggy!” she said cheerfully, “we'll just pretend there wasn't any paper, shall we?”

Peggy flung her arms round the new mistress's neck. “Miss Gray, you're a—a *brick*!” she whispered, “and I'll do simply anything for you, always, for what you did for dear old Peter!—and I'm going straight off to tell the other girls what you're like *really*!”

But at the door she paused and turned, with something of the old mischievous gleam in her face. “Good-bye—*Sister*!” she said, and added in a half-whisper, greatly daring, “I—I wish you *were* my sister—*truly*!”

There were happy tears in Miss Gray's eyes as she kissed her. “Peggy—Peter's own dear little Peggy—I'm so glad,” she murmured, “because, you see, some day I—I'm going to be!”

Helena's Lucky Holiday

How a Mystery of Many Years was Solved

BY ETHEL TALBOT

HELENA sat up in bed and yawned. Her landlady had just dumped down the can of lukewarm water outside the door. In half an hour the breakfast would be laid in her little sitting-room. "An—oth—er day!" yawned Helena. And then—well, she stopped yawning.

For, just peeping under the edge of the door, with their tips turned seductively towards her, were two envelopes. "LETTERS!" shouted Helena. Sleepiness was forgotten. She was out of bed in a twinkling to see her Fate!

For although letters were, always, to Helena, one of the excitements of the day; always, always the postman—whether he was in her own street or somebody else's; whether he was rapping at her own door or that of another—was a being of an extraordinary kind. But these letters—with her holiday ahead, what might not they contain! She had written to a school-fellow or two proposing that, if their free times should by any chance correspond or be made to correspond with her own, perhaps they might join forces for a week or two "somewhere." "There is really a good chance of Annie Smith," thought Helena, picking up her first letter. "Living at home as she does, she can pretty nearly always take her holiday when she likes. This is from her—oh, HURRAH!" She returned to bed bearing the letters both, and hastily tearing open the envelope of the first as she ran. "The other's not interesting. Nothing to do with my holiday, anyway," quoth Helena. "It can wait."

Annie's letter was short and to the point. She was awfully glad that Helena was getting a holiday at last; and hoped, too, that her "poor dear" was getting the greatly deserved "rise." "Can't get away from home just now," wrote Annie; "Dad and mother really can't do without me. But that needn't hinder us meeting, need it, for I've got a plan. Won't you come here? We'd do our best to

give you a good time, though it would be quiet, of course. Write when you get this, and tell me if you will."

The letter dropped from Helena's hands. Here was a new idea, certainly, but not at all an unwelcome one. The holiday would be quiet, as Annie said, and perhaps not "exciting." A little housework, to help Annie, there would be. A walk to the village, perhaps, to do the shopping. A little gardening, and an hour or two spent every day in chatting with the old people who were Annie's parents. But the prospect held its charms, for all that. Helena hadn't had a "home" herself for many years now; she couldn't help thinking that a fortnight spent in such surroundings would be uncommonly cosy. "It's very, very kind of Annie," thought she; "I believe I'll go. It won't be my *ideal holiday*, of course, but I can't expect that for years and years and years!"

For there *was* an ideal holiday to which Helena looked forward. It was written in golden letters in her heart, big golden letters. It was—nothing more nor less than a voyage to Japan! "No, it's not such an outrageous idea!" she would tell her friends. "If I ever could afford to go, why, I'd be worth much, much more in the way of a salary when I got back. There's a firm which would take me on for double what I'm getting now. I'd study design, you see. Yes, I shan't stop saving up; perhaps my day will come!"

And Helena was *still* saving up, though her little stock of coins grew very, very slowly. "Of course, I'm not getting as much salary as most girls," she would tell herself; "but after all I've had no training. Perhaps—when I come back from Japan——"

Her eyes were far away; she visioned herself in a field of blue azaleas, in a land of beauty and colour, even as she laid down Annie's kind little letter and reached for the second envelope.

"DEAR HELENA" it began, the writing was crotchety and black. There were smears on the page. "I hear that you live in London. It is little enough that I hear of any of my nieces. However, I write to tell you that if you care to spare a week or two to spend here, I shall be willing to take you in. But you must come prepared to make yourself useful. I am an old woman with neither will nor power to run about looking after young bones. Write at once and let me know if you are coming.

"MATILDA GREY."

Helena read the letter twice before she even looked up. Then she gasped. "Why, she must have got my address from Aunt Polly," she said; "Aunt Matilda Grey—why, she's hardly any aunt to me at all, really. She's only a sort of far-away cousin. Poor thing—how queerly she writes. I believe I heard that she is most terribly poor. I'd have written to her long ago if I'd ever thought she'd care to hear

from me. But——” She pulled herself together and read the letter for the third time. “She’s unhappy, too,” said Helena, who had learned to “read between the lines of things” during her short but rather chequered life; “Yes, she’s—lonely. Good-bye, dear old Annie, and my holiday with you!” She patted Annie’s letter. “I’m off to Aunt Matilda’s. Yes, I am.”

It didn’t take long to arrange. Her holiday was to begin next week. She wrote to accept her aunt’s invitation that very day and received a note confirming the arrangement before the week was out. “Don’t go bringing a lot of luggage. There is nothing for you to see in the neighbourhood,” wrote the old lady. “A dust-cap and an apron will be needed for the house.”

This sounded suggestive, to say the least of it. But Helena had burnt her boats. She wasn’t going to grouse. She packed up a small suit-case. “After all, it’s only for a week,” said she, “or a fortnight if she wants me to stay. If not, perhaps good old Annie would take me in for the last little bit.”

“Where does Miss Grey live?” she inquired of the porter at the little way-side station where she duly alighted.

“Miss—Grey? Miss——, Oh, you mean *old* Miss Grey. Down at ‘Woodbine Cottage’ off the Station Road, you mean? S’pose she’s at home. Haven’t seen her around. Not that she goes away, of course, I don’t mean. But she’s usually doing a job or two round about as I comes to work.” The porter was inclined to be talkative. Helena didn’t wait to continue the conversation. Off she marched, bag in hand, to “Woodbine Cottage” bent.

“Come right in,” said a voice as she knocked at the door. “I can’t open to you.”

Helena gave a gasp as she entered the cottage in response to this rather questionable greeting. Half-seated on a couch was an old woman, evidently half-doubled up with pain. She made a grim attempt at a smile as she saw her visitor’s round incredulous eyes. “Eh, now you see what you’re in for!” remarked Helena’s hostess. “I’ve had rheumatics more or less all winter. And what with my age and all, it’s not to be wondered at. I’ve got to give in, I suppose. Well, a worse attack than any came on day before yesterday, an’—you see me here. Wonder I’m alive, I should think. Slept in this chair, I have. Couldn’t reach up to my bed. But I *have* kept on.” Her tone was grim; but the grimness was not that of unfriendliness.

“Yes, I *do* see what I’ve come for. And I’m glad I’ve come,” Helena said simply, putting down her suit-case and setting to on the matter in hand.

Helena's Lucky Holiday

Then followed a strenuous time. Helena was no dab at household duties. She had hardly ever had time for anything more than her office work. But she set to with a will and accomplished tasks of which she would have considered herself incapable. The cottage was in a distinctly dusty state; this she quite realised; but her first duty was to her patient. And a patient Aunt Matilda turned out to be in good earnest.

For the old lady was most certainly ill; but no doctor would she have. "No, I'll spend no money in fees," she would declare. "I've little enough in all conscience; I can reckon myself lucky that you came along. It's not often that anybody comes near a penniless old woman like myself."

"Perhaps no—one knew that you would care for them to come. I would have come long ago if I had known," remarked Helena. "You see, I had no idea that——" She broke off. Of all her duties the only one that irked her here was this continual waging war against Aunt Matilda's pessimism. She seemed to have no kind thought of any one of her relations. "I don't often take a holiday," said Helena, changing the subject, "but one day when I do, I'm going out to far Japan."

"I've been there," said Aunt Matilda unexpectedly.

And "far Japan" became, strangely enough, a link between the two. The remembrance of her stay there seemed to change Aunt Matilda's thoughts; to bring back happier memories of the past. "It was when I was lady's maid to my Lady," she told Helena. "Lady Ashmore that was. Aye, I was there with my Lady for years and years. And I should be there now, if she hadn't died. Fine and attentive all my relations was in the times when it was thought that I should retire with a good round pension. But now things are different. Though it certainly wasn't my Lady's fault that things turned out as they were. You've heard of the Ashmore pearls?"

Helena had not. She was thankful that there ever had been any. For here, so it seemed, was a topic on which Aunt Matilda could speak without rancour. "Tell me about them," she asked.

And it appeared, from Aunt Matilda's tale, that the Ashmore pearls had been black pearls of exceeding value. "They belonged to the family," said the old lady, now fairly started, "and my Lady's chiefest treasure they were. But they disappeared when she died very suddenly. And though they've been advertised for, and a reward of thousands offered—as I could show you on a slip of paper that I've kept from the 'Times'—yet, so far as I know, they've never been found!"

"Black pearls!" Helena, who was seated by the fire after a busy day, listened eagerly. "I've never heard of them."

"That's very likely, my dear. That's what makes them valuable. There's few. But my Lady's string was peerless. Forty black pearls there were. She was wearing them one night—indeed, it was the night she died sudden of heart-failure in her bed, poor lady. And in the excitement and worry, I suppose—well, the pearls wasn't thought of for a time. And when my Lord came to me and said that in making up the lists they couldn't be found—why, you could have bowled me right over. We all said the same, we were so taken aback; all us head-servants. For we seemed heart and soul in the family, as it were."

"Yes? And they were never found?"

"Not that I know, my dear. And I think my Lord would have told me. He still writes to me a little, and if he knew how things was with me I'm sure he'd help. But it was my Lady who knew without telling." Aunt Matilda's eyes were dim. "Still, my Lord was kind indeed, and when after my Lady's death the house was shut up sudden he came round to me and said, 'Grey, take some little thing to remember your Lady by. Something from this room.' I was in her dressing-room, my dear, as he spoke."

"Did you?" asked Helena.

"I did, my dear. I took that Japanese bowl you see up there. Me and my Lady had bought it together in some foreign market out in Japan, and it had memories for me. As I said to my Lord, 'No, not jewellery,' I said. He'd wanted me to take a brooch or what-not. 'I'll take *this* with me.' And I brought it here, straight. And I placed it there on that shelf. And, if you'll believe me, my dear, I've not lifted it down since. Save to dust it, it's stood there. I somehow still can't bear to lay a finger on it."

Was this the old relation who had seemed so callous-hearted? Helena, listening, began to understand. Aunt Matilda's heart had been bound up with the family that she had served so long. "And then when I left, at my Lady's death, why, my relations said that it was my own fault that I left poor. 'Better have feathered my nest while I was there,' so your aunts said, my dear. And never none of them took much notice of me after that."

Everything was clear now. Helena felt tears come to her eyes. "Well, *I'm* glad that I came, anyway. And I'll come again whenever you can have me," she said, and she bent down to kiss the old woman whose eyes were on the Japanese bowl.

Their friendship grew apace after that. On her side the old woman

could only give a kind of grudging affection, but Helena by degrees won her way. Perhaps it was Japan which was the link between them; Japan, where "my Lady" had taken her adoring maid; Japan, from which the copper bowl hailed. Helena listened entranced night after night to accounts of azalea-groves and kimono-dressed babies. She heard accounts of visits to a tea-house and of a meal with "my Lady" in a Japanese house with paper walls.

"And now, my dear," said Aunt Matilda on the last night of her stay, "I'm going to let you do what no other ever should do. You've behaved to me as kind as anyone could. You've given me a happier time, my dear, than I've had for years. Would you like—to handle my Lady's Japanese bowl?"

It was thus that the Black Pearls were found. For years they had been searched for in every country of the globe. They were family heirlooms which could never be replaced. They were worth many thousands of pounds. But all the while they had lain unsuspected in the Japanese bowl which "my Lady" had loved, and which her old servant had cherished for her memory's sake.

A strange few days, filled with excitement and wonderful happenings, followed the moment when the unsuspecting Helena, feeling the polished interior of the bowl drew forth a dusty string of what appeared to be worthless old black beads. By her aunt's wish she sent a wire to "my Lord" who, in response to the urgent summons, arrived before the day was out: "Sure, and I never could have guessed it," sobbed Aunt Matilda in his ears. "And they've been here these years while she slept underground. She was always admiring the bowl, dear lady. And I remember her doing it on the last night of all. She was wearing the pearls that night. And I suppose, unthinkingly, she slipped them in——!"

Well, that is the end of the story. The account of the finding of the Black Pearls was in all the papers, but it needed all my Lord's persuasion before Aunt Matilda would take the reward. And when, at last, she yielded to his wishes and agreed that he, himself, should spend a part of it in making her more comfortable for her declining years than she had hitherto been, there was only one other request that the old lady wished to make.

"Helena's got to have that holiday in Japan," quoth Aunt Matilda. "It was she that found them, rightly, not myself."

And that is how Helena went to Japan after all!

Plaster Plaques for Leisure Hours

And Other Novelties a Girl Can Make

BY "ADSUM"

It is during the long winter evenings and the wet and dreary afternoons that we often look for something interesting to while away the time. Books we get tired of, games soon bore us, but here is a pastime attractive, useful and remunerative if you like. The cost is practically nil, for Plaster of Paris is to be our material and a few pence will purchase quite a big supply.

There are so many ways of using this cheap and excellent cement that it is only possible to outline a few uses here. For decorative work it excels; its clean, smooth purity of colour is everlasting and when shades are required it readily lends itself to any colour scheme desired.

One of the most simple plaster novelties is the plaque. Take one of your favourite pictures, perhaps a postcard of a girl's head, and cut it out carefully with scissors. Now procure a dish or plate from the kitchen; a porridge plate makes a good plaque for large pictures, while for very small ones a saucer will answer admirably.

Moisten the plate with clean water and lay your picture, face downwards, on the bottom. Now mix your Plaster of Paris with water until a smooth, fairly liquid paste is obtained, and run it over the plate to a depth of about a quarter of an inch.

Set aside the plate to dry, and then it may be inverted and the plaque tapped out on the table. Do not hurry the drying, for the more slowly the cement is allowed to set, the better the surface around the picture. Quite a high glaze can be obtained if the plate itself has a good surface and is free from the flaws so often found in cheap crockery.

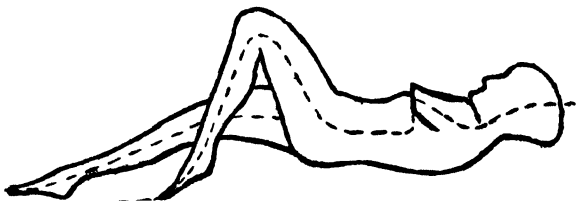
When the plaque is *perfectly* dry and white, bore two small holes at the top, but not too near the edge, and insert a piece of ribbon according to your taste.

Another and better way of finishing off an excellent little picture

is to mount the plaque upon a piece of Venesta or "three-ply" board, cut a little larger than the cement. You will not require any great amount of carpentering skill for this work, neither is the expense great. A simple fretsaw will cut out a neat little backboard, and a few minutes spent in rounding or "bevelling" the edges with a sheet of fine glasspaper are well worth the extra time and trouble.

As a contrast against the white cement black enamel looks very well; a dark oak stain is a good second, showing to advantage the natural grain of the wood, and either may be used to set off your picture.

Now you have finished your base, carefully scrape the back of the plaque with a knife until it lies perfectly flat upon the three-ply board, and give both plaque and board a coat of glue or seccotine. Press them together gently, for too much pressure may crack the cement, and continue the holes you have made in the plaque through the board.



HOW TO MOULD A FIGURE FOR CASTING.

When you tire of the plaster finish, or if the surface is not all it should be, you can enamel the plaster itself, or mix your cement with coloured water. To obtain dark shades strong colours are necessary; cochineal, red ink, and the simple "blue bag" are very effective, and if you wish, you can use Eau de Cologne in place of water. I will not disappoint you by saying a plaque will hold scent for ever, for no sachet will, but for several months your little picture will shed its fragrance all around.

Then, you probably have little ornaments or statues that you like. Why not make up a set? To make a casting in metal is rather an undertaking for an amateur, but with cement an equally good result may be obtained with very little trouble.

First of all we must make a mould in which to pour our plaster. Sealing-wax is perhaps the best medium and even a common or garden candle may be pressed (in two senses) into service. A little bust I brought from Italy was successfully moulded in candle wax and now I have three little figures, one bronze, one white plaster and the other of plaster covered with gold leaf.

Melt your candle or sealing-wax in a little box that will easily hold the article to be duplicated, which we will call by its technical name, the "pattern," and when nearly set, press the pattern in until half of its bulk is in the wax.

Now procure a similar box, or the lid of the other one, fill with wax as before and this will take the impression of the top half of the pattern. If you are using candle wax, cut a sheet of paper to fit around the pattern before you press the two halves together, or they will not come apart easily. With sealing-wax it is sufficient to moisten the lower half first, either with water or, better still, oil.

Now your pattern is moulded, and when hard and cold you can open the two halves of your mould and take out the pattern. From one of the least noticeable parts (the base of a bust, for example) cut a channel in the wax to the outside of your box. Close the two halves again, mix your cement quite liquid and pour it through the channel into the mould.

When quite dry your little plaster bust, or whatever it is, will drop out, a perfect replica that only requires a little smoothing where the moulds met.

For your little brother or sister you can make "bricks" by the hundred. A celluloid hairpin box makes a good mould for these and a real house for dolly will not take long to build. With a little ingenuity you can manufacture window-sills, door-posts, and even a garden seat.

When you have become expert in little things you can try and cast a statue. The dotted lines in my sketch show where the top of the bottom half of the mould must come, so as to allow the little figure to be withdrawn from the wax without damaging the impression.

Now set to work and see what you can do!

Down the Pit Shaft

The Story of Grizel McGregor, Heroine

BY VIOLET M. METHLEY

GRIZEL MCGREGOR sighed, rubbed out a whole column of figures with her sleeve, and began to write down a fresh row.

"It's too hot to do arithmetic," she thought. "I wish—oh, I do wish that it was evening already, and that I was out on the river with Davy!"

Davy was Grizel's twin brother, and everybody in the little mining village of Strathailsa said that the pair were very much alike. They were fair-haired and blue-eyed, and tall for their age, which was fourteen. Davy was already working in the coal-pit, with his father, and Grizel—who hated lessons—was soon hoping to leave school and keep house for them, instead of Aunt Jeanie.

"I wonder whatever is the use of square root!" Grizel thought. "I don't see what's the good of trying to extract a thing which you don't want, and never can want. Why should it matter *how* you extract it, and—oh, what's that!"

The head of every other girl in the room was raised, and Miss Fraser, the teacher, started up from her high desk and stood listening.

Something had happened to disturb the quiet of the hot, summer afternoon. It was a kind of crash and roar together, and afterwards there was a great ringing of bells and hooting of steam-whistles, and much shouting in the village street. But, long before that, all the girls knew what had happened.

"It's an explosion, Miss Fraser!" Grizel cried, running across to the window. "An explosion in the pit—— Don't you hear the fire-bells? That's what always happened—oh, we must go at once!"

Miss Fraser let them run out into the street. Although she had not been long in Strathailsa herself, she knew that in the case of a colliery accident every child in the school would want to know just what had happened—and who were down in the pit.

For they all had fathers or brothers or other relations who were

miners ; it just depended who happened to be on the shift which was working underground at the moment.

Grizel tore down the street, her face very white. Everywhere there were people hurrying along, and there was already a big crowd round the mouth of the pit-shaft.

Women were crying, and hiding their faces in their shawls, and all the men looked grave and anxious. Grizel ran straight up to one of them, a big miner called Ben Mackie.

"Oh, Ben, what is it? What's happened?" she asked, anxiously.

"It's an explosion, and the pit is on fire," Ben said gravely. "We don't know as yet just who are down there—but I haven't seen your father nor Davy at the top, Grizel, my dear, and I'm sore afraid for them, unless they are at home."

"I'll go and see——" Grizel said in a queer, hoarse voice, and she turned and ran as fast as she could down the street again, and along the side alley which led to their little house.

But it was quite empty, as Grizel had feared all the time. Neither her father nor Davy was in the kitchen or up in his bedroom. Aunt Jeanie was away on a visit, and Grizel was quite alone. . . .

And it was as she stood in the kitchen, trying not to think too much about the awfulness of it all, that she had a sudden idea.

Grizel had seen a pit explosion before, although then her father had been safe, and Davy at school. But she knew exactly what happened. They would ask for volunteers to go down the mine to help those below who were half suffocated by the smoke and fumes, and perhaps hurt by the explosion itself.

"And there won't be many men here to go down——" Grizel thought. "The night-shift are nearly all away at that big meeting—almost all of them!"

It was terrible to think that there might not be enough volunteers to do the work—to save the helpless, hurt men in the mine.

"And they won't let a *girl* go down—of course they won't!" Grizel thought desperately. "But—suppose they didn't know I *was* a girl?"

Davy's extra suit of pit clothes was hanging in the scullery—his trousers and overalls, and the cap with the safety-lamp fixed into it.

Without waiting to think, Grizel began to pull off her dress. In a few minutes more she was wearing all her brother's clothes, and pinning up her hair tightly on the top of her head so it was quite hidden by the cap.

Then she ran into the coal cellar and rubbed coal dust all over her face and hands—and then she knew that nobody could possibly tell

that she wasn't Davy himself. It only needed the clothes and the coal dust to make them exactly alike.

But although dressing as a boy sounds so exciting, and so exactly what a girl is always wanting to do, poor Grizel did not feel it so at that moment. She only knew that she was terribly miserable and anxious—and that she must get back to the pit as soon as possible to find out what was happening. She ran as fast as she could up the long street again, to the pit-mouth.

The women and children were still there, waiting and watching, and, as the girl had expected, a few miners were already standing round the cage, just ready to go down.

"Wait—I'll come too!" Grizel called out, imitating Davy's voice as well as she could.

"Hullo, Davy McGregor!" cried Ben Mackie. "Glad to see you're not down there, my lad!—but I'm afraid your father is. I suppose Grizel, poor child, found you at home and told you what had happened, eh? Well, well, so you want to come down with us, do you—brave lad!"

He clapped Grizel on the back and gave her a big cloth soaked in water.

"Wrap it round your face and head, like this," he said. "It'll help to keep the smoke and fumes from suffocating you—and you'll need it. Now, come on!"

Grizel did as she was told, and got into the cage with the rest of the rescue party, feeling safer than ever from being discovered, with the big wet towel wrapped round her face. There were eight of them altogether and the cage began to go down, very slowly.

Great clouds of thick, poisonous-tasting smoke rose up from the pit-shaft and nearly smothered them, and when at last they got to the bottom they were all choking and coughing, and two of the men were quite unconscious and had to be sent up in the cage again to the surface.

Grizel and the others got out and began to grope about in the dark, for the safety lamps gave hardly any light at all. The choking feeling was awful, and it was dreadfully hot and dreadfully difficult to breathe at all.

Presently one of the rescue party called out that he had found a man, and then another found two more, huddled together and quite unconscious, and they were all carried to the foot of the shaft and out into the cage, to be hauled up to the surface.

Then Ben Mackie suddenly shouted to Grizel from a side passage:

"Here's your father, Davy, my boy!" he cried. "And not dead,

either, thank goodness! Come and help me carry him to the cage, best go up with him, too, my lad. After all, you're only a boy, and this is work for grown men down here. You've done enough, now that your father's found—he'll want you when he comes to himself."

"No," said Grizel, as she helped to carry her father to the cage. "I'll stay down a bit longer and do what I can, Ben. I'm all right, and there are none too many to volunteer as it is. You know that."

"Oh, very well!" Ben grumbled. "Only, your father will be blaming me if anything happens to you, lad—I'm quite sure of that."

But Grizel felt that she *could* not go up yet. Glad as she was to know that her father was safe, Davy—her dear twin brother—was still in the pit, and had not yet been found. He might be in one of the farther workings, overcome by the fumes and heat and unable to find his way to the shaft.

"Anyway, I must make sure——" Grizel thought doggedly, and went on groping about in the thick darkness with the others.

She helped to carry some other unconscious men to the cage, although, of course, they were much too heavy for her to lift alone. And all this time the smoke was getting thicker and thicker, and the roaring of the fire came nearer.

"We can't do any more, lads," Ben Mackie said at last. "It will do no good to the other poor fellows if we're caught and suffocated or burnt to death ourselves—and that's what will happen if we don't clear out pretty soon. I'll just have a feel down this passage here—and then we must make a dash for the cage, for we've done all we can."

Mackie turned down a narrow working, and Grizel followed close behind him through the clouds of thick smoke which were rolling down the passage. She did not let Mackie know that she was there, or he would certainly have sent her back. She was nearly suffocated and could hardly get her breath, but she went very slowly, feeling her way by the rails which carry the coal trucks along.

She heard Ben Mackie coughing and choking, and then she heard him call out suddenly:

"Here's another chap—two more——"

Grizel made her way as quickly as she could towards him, and as she did so she heard the big miner talking to himself—

"I can't save both—and it won't be possible to get back here again, that's certain . . . the fire's gaining now—it's very near. Well—I'll take one of the poor chaps—t'other must bide here——"

An instant later, Ben passed Grizel, as she crouched against the wall,

carrying a man on his shoulders. He did not see the girl and she waited until he had gone on, before moving—because she meant to try and find that other man—the one who had been left behind.

The smoke was getting so thick and the heat so terrible that Grizel was really afraid that she would fall down in a faint, but somehow she managed to struggle on, gasping and panting and fighting for every breath.

At first, and for long, long minutes, she could not find anybody. Then, when she had nearly given up hope, she almost fell over something which was huddled against the wall. She knelt down and began to grope and feel over it, with hands which trembled and shook.

"It's Davy—yes, it *is* Davy!" the girl whispered to herself. "There's his curly hair—I'm sure none of the others have hair like that—and—and—yes—that makes it quite certain! There's the ring on his finger that father gave him when he came back from the Front—the silver trench-ring. Oh, Davy, it *is* you, darling—and you're alive, too—I can feel your heart beating!"

But although Davy was certainly not dead, Grizel could not rouse him. He was absolutely unconscious, absolutely overcome by the heat and fumes of the explosion, and although his sister shook him by the shoulder and shouted into his ear, he did not stir a finger—did not answer a word.

"Well, there's nothing else to be done, then!" Grizel thought desperately, as she knelt beside him. "I must carry him back to the cage—somehow!"

Still kneeling, Grizel pulled the boy's hands over her own shoulders; then she struggled up on to her hands and knees and began to crawl along, very, very slowly, with Davy on her back.

It grew hotter and hotter each instant, and the smoke burnt her mouth and throat, so that it was harder than ever to breathe. And Davy grew heavier and heavier, until it just felt as though he must be made of lead to weigh so much!

Grizel could hear Ben Mackie shouting to her from the bottom of the shaft, although his voice sounded queer and muffled through the smoke.

"Davy—Davy—come along, lad! We must go up—we daren't wait down here much longer! Where are you, boy—what are you doing?"

Grizel tried to shout back an answer, but she simply could not. Her voice seemed all dried up in her throat, and she felt as though she had crawled at least a hundred miles with Davy, like lead, upon her back. She could not look round and see whether they were getting

near the shaft, for she could not raise her head—and the fire was roaring so that she could not hear anything except that roar, which drew nearer and nearer each instant.

So she just crawled on—since it did not seem to Grizel that there was anything else to be done.

It seemed as though hours and hours crawled on too—and then quite suddenly the girl heard voices again—voices which were close by. She felt Davy being lifted off her back, and she realised that, without knowing it, she had actually crawled back to the pit shaft.

Then Ben Mackie called out in a startled voice:

“Why, what’s this? What on earth does it mean? There are two of ’em—*two* Davy McGregors!”

There was an outburst of voices, and Grizel just managed to say:

“It’s all right—one of them is me—Grizel!”

Then, after that, she felt as though she simply could not breathe any longer, however much she tried, so she just left off.

When she came to herself again she was up at the top of the shaft, and there was lovely cool air to breathe—*real* air, not hot, stifling chokiness—and someone was splashing cold water on her face, and someone else was telling her that Dad and Davy were both quite safe.

And so they were, alive and safe, and Grizel herself was alive, too—although it was really rather a wonder. But if there was one thing which annoyed her, it was to be told that, and to be called brave.

“All that is just nonsense,” she said. “There wasn’t anything brave in saving my old Davy—why, it was just selfish, for if he had been killed I’d have been miserable for the rest of my life. But I never want to go down a coal pit again—and oh, I do wish that every one would forget all about it!”

But they didn’t. The newspapers didn’t forget, when they printed all about her bravery, and the King didn’t forget when he sent her a special letter signed by himself. And the colliery owners didn’t forget, when she was presented with a lovely gold watch—and I am quite sure that Davy never forgot, either.

The Laying of a Ghost

My Eerie Experience in an Old House

By A. I. R. D.

WHEN I was a girl of sixteen years or so, I realised a cherished ambition by winning a certain scholarship to the tune of £150, for which, however, I had to "pay the piper" by a severe nervous breakdown immediately after the examination. As soon as I was strong enough to travel, my parents packed me off to a couple of elderly relations living in the wilds of Wales, to recuperate; and my young brother Sammy was sent with me in order to give me the benefit of cheerful company and a definite interest in life. Sammy's company was cheerful enough, certainly, although I often found it far from being an unmixed blessing; and the "interest in life" (which resolved itself into keeping him out of mischief) was definite enough too.

We found ourselves in a rambling old house of rather picturesque exterior, being a perfect maze of stone corridors full of bewildering twists and turns inside, with unexpected doorways and disastrous steps hidden away in dark corners. Sammy was charmed; it was much more exciting than a smuggler's cave, he said, and must be full of ghosts. Anyway, if *he* were a ghost, it was just the sort of place he'd choose for nocturnal larks.

He was very soon acquainted with every attic, nook and cellar, and made staunch friends of the elderly abigail and groom, who were the only indoor servants in this old-world, but altogether delightful, establishment. There was also an old cattleman named Williams, who lived in a sort of bothy on the farm, with whom Sammy became most friendly, for he was quite a human storehouse of folk-lore and ghost stories, and, from Sammy's point of view, a most interesting acquisition to his circle of friends and acquaintances in consequence.

Our bachelor grand-uncle and his maiden sister were most kind, and not a bit exacting (as we had fully expected such ancient unmarried folk to be). They let us run wild and do pretty much as

we liked, trusting to our honour to keep us out of scrapes ; although Sammy, notwithstanding the very best of intentions, had now and then to "explain."

One memorable evening I sat curled up in an easy-chair absorbed in an interesting book, when Aunt Jane burst into the cosy sitting-room in her abrupt, energetic fashion. "Would you like to drive with your uncle and myself as far as the village?" she inquired. "We shall be gone about two hours, and I've given Ann leave to run over to her sister's while we're out, so you might feel lonely stopping indoors by yourself."

My book was delightful, and I felt extremely comfortable, so I declined aunt's well-meant invitation.

"Are you sure you won't feel lonely, child? It will be dark before we return, you know," said she, a little anxiously.

"Lonely? Not a bit, aunty dear," I airily replied. "I've got to such an exciting part of my book; I *must* find out how it is to end. I daresay I shan't miss you till you are back again. Is Sammy going with you?"

"Sammy!" snorted Aunt Jane. "Your uncle was after him about half an hour since for hanging on to a calf's tail. The poor thing was careering like a mad thing over the grass, with that tiresome boy holding on to it like anything. He didn't mean to be cruel, of course; he is just thoughtless. Now neither Sammy nor the calf can be found, though I *did* see him—Sammy, I mean—talking to old Williams since then."

"What a scamp that boy can be sometimes," I sighed. "Well, no doubt he will soon be in clamouring for something to eat; but I do hope he will let me finish my book first."

My aunt then took her departure, and when I heard the wheels of the chariot crunching down the drive, I turned to my book once more with a contented sigh.

It was dusk when I came to the thrilling conclusion of the tale, and I had to move quite close to the window in order to get the full benefit of the faded light. Then I sat dreamily gazing out into the twilight. Everything seemed very still and peaceful. Even the birds had ceased their good-night twitterings and flutterings. Beyond the lawn there stretched a small plantation of pines and fir-trees which, in the gathering gloom, gradually assumed a solemn, mysterious appearance; and I remember whimsically speculating as to whether it would surprise me very much to see wolves rush forth howling from those shadowy recesses.

I turned away from the window with a shiver and a slightly nervous

laugh, and briskly set about making the room look a little more cheerful. I had mended the fire and was proceeding to light the lamp, when an indescribable sound stole through the house. The match dropped from my fingers, and I stood motionless, chilled to the heart with fright. It was a weird, wailing noise, unlike anything I had ever heard before, and to my startled fancy the deep silence which followed seemed throbbing with horror.

I listened intently for a minute or two, but could hear only the rapid thumping of my own heart. Then I pulled myself together, and attempted to strike another match ; my fingers, however, trembled so that it refused to light, and I threw the box down with an impatient exclamation.

The fire was now glowing cheerfully, and, summoning my courage, I boldly walked over to the door, opened it, and peered out into the dark network of passage-ways. How I longed to hear Sammy's well-known footstep and gay whistle break the eerie stillness. The slow ticking of the old clock in the corridor seemed to have become loud and assertive, and the fire leaped and crackled mockingly behind me, sending uneasy shadows dancing across the gloom. I resolved to get out into the open air, and go to seek the tiresome Sammy ; no doubt he was now seated in old Williams's hut listening to gruesome ghost stories, which were really not at all good for him. But, no sooner had I stepped out into the corridor, than the silence fled before a hideous succession of wails, shrieks and groans. Beside myself with terror, I sprang back into the sitting-room and banged the door shut. Then, my limbs refusing to support me, I slid down upon the floor in a nerveless heap.

Presently the blood-curdling clamour ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and the horrid silence again took possession of the house, broken as before only by the slow, steady tick of the old grandfather-clock and the crackling of the blazing fire. I tried hard to puzzle out the matter sensibly, but it must be remembered that my nerves, to begin with, were in a sadly weakened condition, and scraps of Sammy's rubbishy ghost stories floating through my memory hindered me from arriving at any sane or satisfactory solution of the mystery.

"Whatever *could* it have been?" I was asking myself for about the twentieth time, when I heard steps on the gravel path outside approaching the window. My heart leapt thankfully. It must be Sammy or Williams, I concluded. Hastily gathering myself up, I ran across to the window, only to be confronted by an appalling figure standing dim and white in the darkness. An unearthly face, with wild, staring eyes, was pressed against the glass. I heard a deep sigh and

a laboured groan, and then the face disappeared. At the same moment the fearsome wailing within broke out afresh, and with the din inside there now mingled the noise of wildly galloping footsteps without.

I could stand no more ; it was too terrifying. With a shriek I fell to the floor insensible.

When I recovered my wits again I was lying on the couch and the room was brightly lighted. A pungent odour of burning feathers brought with it a consciousness of Aunt Jane's presence. She was bending over me, waving the frizzling bunch of abomination underneath my nostrils.

Uncle, leaning over her shoulder, sprinkled both of us impartially with cold water from a large ewer he held in his hand. On perceiving that I was awake, they ceased their ministrations, and, clinging to them hysterically, I attempted an incoherent description of my experiences during their absence. They both looked very puzzled and worried during my recital.

"And Sammy never turned up," I concluded tearfully. At this, Aunt Jane gave a little exclamation and hurriedly went out of the room.

My uncle was still soothing me when she grimly marched in again leading my indignant brother Sam by the ear. Clutched firmly to his bosom he held a violin, the bow, depending from his other hand, trailed along the floor.

"I don't know what it is all about," he spluttered wrathfully. "It's my own fiddle ; old Williams gave it me—he says I've got the gift ; and I went right up into the attics so as to worry no one. It isn't fair !"

"I can quite believe you, Gwenda, when you say the sounds were weird beyond expression," said my aunt severely. "Sammy *may* one day become a Kubelik ; but the process will probably take a little time. In the meantime, sir, you've nearly been the death of your sister !"

Uncle had produced a large pocket-handkerchief and was violently blowing his nose.

"But, aunt," I gasped, "how do you account for that dreadful face at the window ?"

"Thank your brother Sammy again," sniffed Aunt Jane. "He terrorised the poor white calf to such a degree this afternoon that it defied our united efforts to catch it or to drive it into shelter ; and, finally, got lost, as I mentioned to you before. Afterwards it got into the garden somehow, and has been wandering about the lawn and

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scampering over my flower-beds. Oh, Sammy, Sammy!" and she shook a reproachful forefinger at him.

My uncle, who had been valiantly endeavouring to maintain a serious expression, now burst into a fit of laughter, in which the graceless Sam heartily joined. My aunt, finding her freezing stare lost upon them, walked out of the room with great dignity; and then, I'm afraid I laughed too.

I don't believe in ghosts now; neither does Sammy. And when I hear other people talking about ghostly appearances, and strange, uncanny noises that they can only explain on supernatural grounds, I tell them about my own eerie experience in the old Welsh house. Pretty well all the talk about ghosts, I daresay, would resolve itself into moonshine were the matter sifted to the bottom. And if it isn't a silly, harmless calf that is responsible, it is certain to be some other material cause. Don't you think I'm right?

Their Silver Wedding

How David Gregg and his Wife Celebrated the Event

BY NORAH PITT-TAYLOR

“AND they’ll not take you back, then, dearie?”

With troubled eyes, Janet Gregg looked up at her husband as he stood beside her chair, his hands gripping the brim of the shabby chimney-pot hat he never failed to remove in her presence.

All the way back from the City he had been dreading the moment when she would look at him as she was looking now, but adversity had not yet robbed him of the dogged courage which had carried him over many a rough place upon the great high road of life’s journey, and meeting her eyes he put his right hand upon her shoulder.

“It’s not to be expected that they would, Janet,” he said slowly. “I am not just the man I was before I cracked my skull down yon grating; I’ve not the head on me once I had, for all the wee silver plate the doctor’s fixed in; you couldn’t be expecting to get figures and such like from off a silver plate, could you now?”

Receiving no reply to the question he had striven so hard to answer for himself, he set his hat down upon the table, staring at it intently.

“There’s a youngish chap taken in my place,” he blurted. “He’ll be fresh from some kind of a college, from the look of him, and he is a great one at the languages—French, German, and Latin, and a dash of yon new one there was the talk about a while since, Esperanty—ay, that was the name of it. Mr. Wallace was very kind, asking after my head and all, but—well, it’s a younger man they are wanting for the work now, and one without a silver plate inside his head. It’s—it’s just natural, Janet, and there’s plenty of offices I can get a job at; I have my character and my testimonials from them, and Mr. Wallace was advising me to try for a quieter kind of a place, where there’s not the press of work they have there. I have some addresses in my pocket, and I was thinking I would be trying them to-morrow. I would have been away after them when I left the office, but I—I was feeling a wee thing queer with it being my first return to the City after

my illness ; the sun was so strong in the streets, and there's an awful row down there, what with the motor buses and all ; but maybe, if I was to take a penny ride from here about four o'clock, I——"

"'Deed, and you'll do no such thing !"

Janet Gregg rose to her feet.

"You're just tired out, dearie !" she cried. "There's shadows on your face I could rest my finger in—you'll take no penny rides the day ; you'll not set foot over the doorstep. Sit ye down in the chair there, and smoke your pipe while I see after a cup of tea for ye, and—I'm glad about Wallace's, Davie—ay, I'm glad ; you're not fit for a great bustling place like yon. You'll be a deal better in some wee office where they take things slow and write their letters in a language folk can read."

Hard and fast she talked, setting the big white tea-cups out on the spotless cloth, the brown teapot beside them, while from the old arm-chair on the hearth the man she loved watched her, his eyes wistful in their weariness and disappointment.

So greatly he had hoped when he had set out for the office of his late employer, confident that his old place would be waiting for him, that he had only to present himself to be re-installed. All the way down the Strand his heart had been beating hard, and he had gripped the bone handle of his walking-stick, his eyes eagerly taking note of each familiar object, his thoughts darting back into the past and on into the future in which he and Janet would leave their worries behind them, and step forward into the glad dawn which would herald the breaking of their silver wedding-day. Once even, he paused before the window of a jeweller's shop, planning what he would buy there for her. And then, in the small room he knew so well, the blow had fallen—his place had been filled three days after his accident, and if it had not been so, he would never have been called upon to fill it again. A good memory, a knowledge of languages, shorthand, typewriting, a quick brain—these were the accomplishments necessary in the office now, and—he was out of the running with his shattered health, his trepanned skull !

They let him down as gently as they could ; but it was true—he would never again be the man he had been. Honesty and a faithful service—these he could still give, but the good memory, the quick brain, were his no longer.

"Sup your tea now, dearie, and don't be fretting. Wallace's is no' the only firm that's needing a superior clerk."

With her own bitter disappointment held bravely in check, Janet Gregg pushed his cup and saucer along the table towards him, turn-

ing quickly to the stove again that she might not see his hand tremble as he lifted it.

"A' things come to them that waits, Davie," she said cheerily. "We ken fine that's the truth, seeing that we waited ten years and over for our wedding-day. Do ye mind it, auld man, the months and the years, and you away here earning, and me waiting yonder, and the letters going back and forward, and the wee gifts we kept on sending?"

"I have the white heather yet!"

Eager as a boy, the present with all its trouble and anxiety forgotten, David Gregg put his hands on hers as she turned to him.

"I have it yet, Janet," he cried. "It's in the back of my watch here."

Away to memory's garden then they hurried, wandering down the pathways, their feet falling lightly on the soft petals of love's roses; while without, the world went on its way, the roar of the streets rushing by, a mighty river in which the fittest only may hope to survive.

Very early on the morrow David Gregg set forth again upon his quest, hope springing in his heart, and from the doorstep the woman he loved watched him go, a smile upon her lips.

All day long she worked in the little house, which had been their home ever since he had brought her a bride to London. She was afraid to sit down and rest lest the worry got the better of her, as it was so apt to do, or the sick faintness that for so many days had taken to sweeping over her, robbing her of all her strength. It was only the hot weather and the reaction from those awful days when she had waited the dread summons from the hospital where Davie and his broken skull were lying. She would be herself again in a little while; it was nothing, nothing at all—it could not be now that Davie was home again!

With a desperate courage she reassured herself, and then—the chair on which she was leaning slid away from her, and she sank down—down—down into an impenetrable darkness.

"Janet—Janet, what's come to ye—did ye fall and hurt yoursel'?"

Out of the darkness David's voice called to her, and with an effort she looked up to find him on his knees beside her, his hat tilted to the back of his head.

"You've hurt yoursel' some way; what is it, dearie?"

In an agony he spoke to her, chafing her cold hands between his own.

Raising herself a little, she leant against him. "It's nothing," she

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protested feebly. "It's nothing; I was standing a minute, and I turned dizzy-like; it's that hot working——"

Even as she spoke the darkness closed in upon her again.

David and the doctor between them carried her into the little back bedroom, and the doctor's kindly eyes were grave and pitying as he wrote out his prescription.

"She must be kept very quiet," he said briefly. "And above all things, she must not be allowed to worry; keep her happy, whatever you do."

"Happy!" Repeating the word after him, David Gregg met his eyes vaguely. "Right, doctor," he said hurriedly, "I'll—I'll do my best."

For some minutes after the doctor's car had whizzed out of sight, he remained standing in the doorway gazing fixedly at the dingy front of the boarding-house across the way.

"Keep her happy, whatever you do!"

The words were ringing in his ears, beating round his heart, driving out the hopeless disappointment he had brought back with him from the City, urging him on to desperate action. Taking his courage in his two hands, he turned back into the house, closing the door softly after him.

"David—David, are ye there? I'm better again, dearie; it was just the dizziness—come away to me, and tell me all about it. Did you have good luck in the City? Have you a job, dearie?"

Oh, the anxiety in the sunken eyes, the eagerness in the uneven voice—so much it meant to her; and, knowing it, David Gregg sat down on the chair by the bed, a dauntless resolution on his rugged face.

"I have a job, dearie," he said steadily. "I—it's going to be all right with us now; it was just the finest bit of luck going. I had been round to they places I had the addresses of, but there was nothing just suitable, and I was feeling down-hearted like, and then I just stepped right on it, and it's the very job for me, Janet."

"Is it a quiet one, David?—one o' the old-fashioned kind, where you'll not get pushed and flustered? And it will be in the City, I suppose; you'll be starting away of a morning with your wee bag and all—oh, but I'm glad of it—it's just as if you'd come and lifted a great load from off me; but I knew it would come, dearie, I knew fine they would take you, once you went to the right place. It'll not be very small, will it? Not one o' they wee box-rooms, poked away up a close—you'll be getting the air moving about ye?"

Raising herself on the pillows, she scanned his face, anxiety again

in her eyes ; and, meeting them, the old man bent down, patting her thin hand.

"There's plenty air going where it is, Janet," he replied. "It's a fine, big, open kind of a—kind of a place, and there's just myself to be in it, and I can be taking my own time, so long as I get through with the clients. I'll not be pushed, anyway, and I'm thinking that I'll manage fine ; but I was thinking, Janet, we'll not be cutting a dash—not at the start, anyway. We'll just be jogging along quiet like, and putting by against our silver wedding. Maybe I could get a holiday for it ; it would be fine to take a day in the country, lassie !"

Drawing a deep breath, the sick woman lay back upon the pillows, her eyes shining.

"It would be the best of all, Davie," she whispered. "We'll be putting by for it—every penny piece."

"And you've to think on a gift for yourself—what would you have from the auld man, Janet ?"

It was the lover of twenty-eight summers ago who spoke to her—the old boyish eagerness in look and voice, and with the colour tinging her worn face she met his look.

"A silver locket, Davie," she said shyly. "A silver locket with your portrait set inside it."

A silver locket ! David Gregg's foot scraped the floor, his head sank suddenly on his breast ; the next moment he was sitting erect again.

"You'll get it, lassie—you'll get it on the day, and a letter with it. I am going to send you a letter—for auld lang syne."

His voice broke on the words, but she understood, for were not her eyes filled with tears of happiness, was not her own heart too full for speech ?

The heat of the long summer day was passing away with the sun, and beyond the chimney-pots and tiles the western sky was softly aglow with the tenderness of the day's farewell to the world.

From business house and offices, from factory and store, the vast army of workers came hurrying, and from the corner by the Tube station, David Gregg watched them come, his boot-brush in his hand, his wee bag beside him.

"Keep her happy—whatever you do."

In the roar of the traffic, in the tramp of feet, in the chiming of the clock near by, he heard the injunction, and his heart cried out to the God of all in justification for his juggling with the truth. He had his

job in the City; there was no one but himself in the outer office, with its plentiful supply of air; this much he had told Janet truly, but the wee bag of which he kept the key—there was a world of deceit in that, for she believed it to contain precious documents of a private nature, and it held his brushes, his velvet pad, his tins of boot polish!

But he had kept her happy, and it was for that he lived, for that he toiled, for that he—lied—and—God knew it.

It was at a later hour than usual that he returned home that evening, and, leaving his bag in the kitchen, he hastened into the bedroom where his wife lay waiting for him.

"I was detained in the City, Janet," he explained. "But I'll not be a minute; I've just to get my hands washed, and then I'll be in to ye."

The washing of those hands had puzzled her sorely at first.

"You never used to get yourself messed up that way, Davie," she had exclaimed. "What's come to you; do they not keep the place clean for ye, or are ye getting careless like with the writing?"

Shamefaced, he held his tell-tale hands behind him. "It'll be the latter, Janet," he said slowly. "I'm not so smart as I was with the pen, and ink is such a job to get off if you let it stop too long."

She had understood then in a minute, and he heard her laughing softly to herself over his "schoolboy tricks."

"Davie," she announced as he took the chair by her bed, "I was speaking to the doctor when he was in to-day; it's time I was getting about again. I'm thinking that I'll be starting the morn; he didn't encourage me anyway, but they're over anxious about keeping me in bed, being what they are. We should be sitting down to our breakfast together on our silver wedding-day, auld man."

"Our silver——"

Breaking off abruptly, David Gregg stared before him, his hand grippin' the tail of his shabby morning-coat as it lay over his thigh.

It was to-morrow, and he had forgotten it! She would be looking for his gift, the silver locket with his portrait, and he had no means whatever of getting it for her—the boot-cleaning trade bringing in no large returns through the summer. Every treasure he possessed had been offered at the shrine of the golden balls that she might know nothing of the struggle he was having to make two ends meet; even his silver watch had gone, an empty boot-polish tin taking its place in his waistcoat pocket—an empty tin, with a tiny spray of white heather inside it!

"If I was to get on my clothes to-morrow, we might be managing our day in the country on Saturday, Davie, if you could get a holiday."

The sick woman's eyes were eager as she spoke, and, meeting them, he bent and kissed her thin grey hair.

"You've to get well, dearie," he said slowly. "You've to get well before we think on any trips. I was thinking on a plan—I was thinking that I would be setting out the breakfast by the bedside here, and we would be taking it together, the same as we used to do after the wee boy came."

His voice dropped a little, and moving her hand till it touched his, she lay very still.

"Twenty-three he would have been, Davie," she said dreamily. "A grown man of twenty-three; but it wasn't to be; we were just meant to be the two of us—whiles I wonder about him, Davie—he was so wee to take sic a long journey."

An hour later David Gregg stole from the room, leaving her in the quiet sleep which had fallen upon her as they talked. Pausing a moment in the kitchen, he waited irresolute. Then, taking his bag from sheer force of habit, he hastened from the house, leaving word with a neighbour of his going.

Straight to the doctor's house he took his way, for a wonderful inspiration had come to him, setting his heart beating high with hope.

"I was wanting to ask a question, doctor," he blurted, as the door of the consulting-room was closed behind him. "It's about yon wee plate in my head. I am a strong man now, I am not needing it—could ye be taking it out again for me? I would be greatly obliged to ye if ye could; it'll be a fine bit of silver, will it no'? And with my wife needing things, it doesn't seem right, someway, to be keeping it. Could you slip it out for me, doctor—for the love of God, could you do that?"

Gripping his bag with both hands, he stood with his face to the light, and, turning swiftly away, the doctor kept silence a moment.

"No, Gregg," he answered briefly. "I am sorry, but you ask the impossible; it never is done, it never could be done. It is worth more to your wife where it is than it ever would be anywhere else."

For a moment the room swam before David Gregg's eyes; then, pulling himself together, he took his hat off the chair where he had placed it.

"Thank you, doctor," he said vaguely. "Thank you, I was just wondering—thank you, doctor!"

With pitying eyes the doctor waited his next patient.

"Poor old chap!" he muttered. "That crack on his skull knocked him sillier than I thought."

David Gregg's chimney-pot hat was not on quite straight as he

left the house, and the wee bag seemed to have grown very heavy; but things are apt to be like this when a big hope has met with a shattering blow. He had felt so certain of the doctor's ability to aid him in the carrying out of his little plan; he had been so sure that he would be able to get rid of the silver plate and get a silver locket in its place; but it was impossible—it never had been done, and it never could be done. He would have to break his promise to Janet; he would have to tell her all the sorry truth of his deception, open the wee bag, and show her the brushes, the duster, the pad, and the boot-polish tins!

Lifting the latch, he entered, closing the door noiselessly after him. On tip-toe he crept into the bedroom. She was still asleep. For a moment or two he remained there looking at her, then softly he stole out of the room. Not altogether would he fail her upon their silver wedding-day; she should have her love-letter—the odd pennies in his pocket would pay for the stamp; he would sit down now and write it to her while she slept; then he would steal out and post it in the red pillar-box at the corner, and it would be on her plate at breakfast-time, and—it would help, perhaps, to make up for the rest.

The clock above the mantelpiece ticked the minutes away; the sounds in the street grew less and less; the stars gleamed a brighter gold in the darkening sky; and still his pen scraped to and fro on the paper as he poured out his love for her; the years rolling back as he wrote—back to the summer of their wedding, the hour when he had slipped the ring upon her finger—the day of days when he had brought her home to London.

Into the pillar-box at the corner he dropped the bulky envelope at last, running up the street, bareheaded under the stars.

"Janet," he called softly, entering the bedroom again—"Janet, would you take a drop of the broth now—have ye had your sleep out now, dearie—you've been a long time at it; we——"

The words died suddenly on his lips, and, sinking on his knees by the bed, he searched the still face, then blindly he groped for her hand.

"Janet!" The husky cry broke from him; but she smiled still, for in her heart was the glad knowledge which comes with the peace that passeth all understanding.

Through the long night he watched by her, his mind working slowly and painfully. It was all wrong somehow, and yet it was all very right, for she had been very happy when she had set out on the long journey, and it was he who had kept her so—he, and his wee bag between them.

The postman's knock roused him at last, and with a vivid flash he remembered. It was their silver wedding-day, and she would look for his letter. On tip-toe he stole out to fetch it, bringing it in to her, placing it carefully within her hand.

"Yon's for you, Janet," he whispered. "A love-letter from the auld man—there'll maybe be bits in it you'll like to get reading to the bairn; you'll know them when they come. It'll give him a notion of the love that went between us."

On the morning after the day on which he followed her on foot to a corner of the big cemetery, he set out with his bag again. She would be looking for him to go to the City, and not for worlds would he fail her—for he must keep her happy.

With the one thought dominating all others, he set his hat firmly on his head, taking his way into the heart of the City, and there—across the wide thoroughfare, he saw her standing waiting for him, the smile he knew so well upon her lips.

"Right, lassie—I'm coming."

Those who passed by heard him speak to her, and then he stepped off the kerb, and the taxi-cab driver shouted hoarsely as he rammed on his brakes. The blame was not his; every witness of the accident agreed on that point, but David Gregg never gave the matter a thought. It was nothing to him how it all came about; how should it be? For he had gone out into the sunshine with the woman he loved, that together they might keep the festival of their Silver Wedding Day.

What Pet Shall I Keep?

This Article Suggests Many Answers to that Question

BY RAYMOND RAIFE

WITHOUT the least doubt, most girls are the happier for keeping a pet of some kind. Animals are always interesting ; of course, some more so than others. And it certainly adds to the attractions of one's home when we know that a nicely behaved dog or cat is waiting to welcome us back there. In many ways dogs are the finest pets of all, though plenty of ladies would award first prize in that respect to poor Puss. We will admit, then, that both dogs and cats are most desirable four-footed companions. For all that, tastes differ. And there are also some who wish for novelty in their pet-keeping. That being so, let us have a little talk about possible pets of various kinds, for this once leaving our old friends the dog and cat out of the discussion.

As you will perhaps be aware, the live stock trade—I was really just about to write “the pet trade”—was hugely affected by the war, which in some directions stopped supplies altogether. Goldfish are pets of a sort, though certainly not very demonstrative ones. Well, not so very long ago there arrived in London the first consignment since 1914 of Italian goldfish. There were some 5000 of them, and they at once sold in one lot. The same tale could be told in other quarters. Pets of all varieties have been scarce. Now the market is fairly well stocked again, and we can make a selection to suit our individual preference. This article may help us to decide what that choice shall be.

As a lifelong keeper of pets, I must say that I feel obliged to begin by paying a compliment to the guinea-pig. I have recommended guinea-pigs as pets to many girls and boys and never once has the pig betrayed my faith in him. A guinea-pig is not a very intelligent animal, there is nothing really 'cute about him. But he is what I may call safe. He is easy to feed, will live in almost any kind of hutch, and is clean and contented. Tameness is one of his chief

attributes and he has no objection to being stroked and handled. All things considered, he is thoroughly satisfactory.

Nowadays, as you may be informed, the old-fashioned guinea-pig has blossomed out into being a cavy. And of cavies there are quite a number of distinct varieties. Nice little fellows most of them are, too. Broadly speaking, they may be divided into two classes: namely, the rough-coated and the smooth-coated. To the former category belong the harsh-coated Abyssinian and the long-coated Peruvian, neither of which should I recommend to an absolute beginner at cavy-keeping. The smooth-coats are the most popular, and of them you can take your pick: gold and silver agoutis, Himalayan, Dutch, brindles, selfs, tortoiseshell, tortoiseshell and white. The Himalayan and the Dutch are so called because the aim of the breeder is to produce a cavy as like as possible in markings to the Himalayan and Dutch rabbit respectively. From personal experience I can speak strongly in favour of the Dutch cavy—and also of the Dutch rabbit—as a pet. The selfs include self white, black, red, cream and self chocolate, all very good looking.

A word as to choosing a smooth-coated cavy. Pick out the most cobby animal you can find, and one that has a large, chubby head and fat cheeks. He should have a bent-down, Roman nose, and full, prominent eyes. Look also for deep shoulders, bull neck, a wide back, and fairly large, nicely shaped ears.

The principal consideration in cavy-keeping is that these pets should be dryly housed. Especially must they be provided with warm, snug, sleeping-places. The best bedding is hay, or straw cut into short pieces, on an under layer of sawdust. Suitable food exists in ample variety. It includes oats, bran, hay, bread and milk, Indian meal, barley meal, and almost any kind of green stuff. Two meals a day will suffice, the morning one being of green-meat and dry bran. Cavies require water, just as rabbits do, and like rabbits they benefit by an occasional drink of milk.

Should you decide upon the rabbit as your pet, be sure to remember the aforesaid beautiful little Dutch variety. The body colour of these is white. When the other colour is, for instance, blue, the rabbit is known as a blue Dutch. And there are blacks (perhaps the best of all), tortoiseshells, fawns, and blue-greys and steel-greys. Other varieties of rabbit besides the Dutch are Angoras, lops, silvers and tans. Should the Himalayan rabbit tempt your fancy, bear in mind that it is somewhat delicate.

Girls are usually supposed to be rather afraid of mice. I have known several girls who kept fancy mice as pets. There are such

varieties as blues, blacks, Dutch, silvers, chocolates, agoutis, tans, fawns, whites and tortoiseshells. One great advantage of mice as pets is that they take up very little room. A flat, wire-topped cage for a pair of mice may measure 12 inches by $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 4 inches deep ; it should not be less. The cage should be kept in a place that is dry and free from draughts, and that is warm in winter and cool in summer. Make a note of the curious fact that tame mice in their cages require to be protected from the attacks of wild mice. Many mouse-fanciers nearly cover over the wire portion of the cages with glass, as a safeguard against marauding mice, leaving a small space by which air can enter, but through which the wild mice cannot bite the captive ones.

Both dry and soft food should be given to mice. A good mixture consists of 1 quart oats, $\frac{1}{2}$ pint canary seed and $\frac{1}{2}$ pint white millet, a tablespoonful to each mouse daily. Grain is best given at the evening feed. Two mornings a week give a small piece of dog-biscuit soaked in skim milk ; on the other days a piece of stale bread similarly moistened.

Dormice are pretty little creatures. Their food consists of corn, cracked nuts, bread and milk, small apples. A dormouse, though, will not be your pet all the time, for this is an animal that hibernates. Keep a few nuts always in the cage of a hibernating dormouse, so that the little fellow may have something handy to eat when he wakes up. And never wake up a dormouse when it has gone to sleep for the winter. If you do you may find that you have killed it.

Perhaps the idea may occur to you that you would like to keep a hedgehog, which is likewise a hibernating animal. The hedgehog is an interesting creature, but, unless you can keep him in the garden, I can hardly advise him as a pet. He will destroy beetles and other insect pests, but is himself liable to be infested with fleas. In the garden, where he should have a nice, warm, dry hutch, he will do fine work at destroying snails and slugs. But as a rule the garden does not long contain the hedgehog, which has a perfect genius for regaining its liberty.

As you may be aware, several of the big stores in London have their zoological departments. There you may purchase pets of all kinds. Not long after the beginning of the war, and before supplies of live stock had become seriously affected, I paid a visit to one of these zoological departments. And I recall that, amongst other creatures, it was possible to purchase the following :

Squirrels, parrots, monkeys, mongooses, rats, ravens, doves, budgerigars, gold-fish, tree-frogs, salamanders, tortoises, love-birds,

mynah birds, jerboas, lizards and jackdaws. In addition to which there were many kinds of British birds.

If you acquire a squirrel it is advisable to have a young one. Those that have been caught when full grown are liable to be morose, timid and wild. An old squirrel has yellow teeth.

A most extraordinary bird is the parrot. Some parrots are beautiful to look at, some are truly wonderful talkers. And as a general rule the finest talkers are the plainest-looking birds. There are plenty of talking parrots that have a vocabulary running into scores of words. All things considered, the best kind of parrot is the African grey. And it is the most expensive. Amazon parrots though, nearly rival the popularity of the African grey; and they are good talkers. If you want to teach an Amazon to talk you should choose one of either the Blue-Fronted or the Double-Fronted varieties.

A rather less orthodox sort of pet is a mongoose, a grizzly-grey creature that grows about half as big as a cat. It can be kept in a stout, securely-made rabbit-hutch, which, however, should be brought indoors in the winter. Quite tame as a mongoose will become and affectionately as it will greet its owner, caution should be observed in the way of handling the animal. A mongoose has a rather uncertain temper, and the moment it feels upset it tries to bite. For that reason it is a creature that more successfully appeals to a girl who wants to have a private zoo of her own. The little Indian mongoose is the most suitable for keeping in captivity in this country. It is more of a chestnut colour, and about the same size as a squirrel.

Undulated grass parakeet: that is the more ample name of the beautiful little budgerigar. This is an exquisite small bird, and in one respect the most agreeable of the parrot family, for it does not shriek or scream. Also, it is certainly the most popular of all the foreign cage-birds, breeding freely in fair-sized aviaries or even in cages. The budgerigar is a friendly, companionable bird, and being gregarious, it does best and rears its young more freely if a whole number of these pleasing pigmy parrots live together. You can distinguish the birds that have been bred in this country from those recently imported from Australia. The former have legs more of flesh colour, the legs of the latter are dark blue.

As already intimated, an ample supply of goldfish is now on sale over here. Contrary to an old-established belief that still prevails in some quarters, goldfish do require to be fed. They will freely eat breadcrumbs, but these should not be given as they turn the water sour. The proper food is a pinch at a time of dried "ants' eggs,"

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really cocoons, which cost about three-and-ninepence for a whole pound. Crushed vermicelli is another good food, also small portions of lettuce leaf. A capital plan is to obtain a spray of watercress that has some roots attached to it, and to plant this in the aquarium. It will help to keep the water fresh, will improve the appearance of the aquarium, and the fish will nibble the leaves. If properly cared for, goldfish become very tame. They grow to as much as a foot in length and have wonderfully long lives. Never overcrowd them. If they gulp at the surface for air, you should aerate the water with a syringe.

Our old acquaintance the tortoise makes a sedate pet. About November a tortoise that lives out in the garden will gradually cease to feed. It will then bury itself in the ground by digging with its front feet and throwing the earth over its back with its hind feet. But I must warn you of the fate of at least two of the tortoises that I kept as pets. The soil was clay; in this they buried themselves, and never again came forth alive. The damp and the cold killed them. For that reason the better plan is to bring your tortoise indoors in the autumn and let it hibernate in a box filled with hay.

But remember that a tortoise thus brought indoors should be kept in a cold room. A dormouse, too, should be in a cold apartment in winter. Otherwise the process of hibernating is interfered with. During a spell of warm weather, the tortoise may wake up. Should he do so, offer him food, say, some bread and milk. Lettuce he also likes, but lettuces are not everywhere during the winter.

What about a jerboa as a pet? Queer little things are these, as big as a small rat, with very thin, long hind legs, and very short front legs, carried tucked up prettily under the chin. The light fawn fur is so thick that it looks like plush. And the long tail has at its end a black and white tuft. Half beast, half bird as, springing here and there on its hind legs, the jerboa appears to be, it affords much amusement if allowed the run of a room. Evening is, though, the only time when you will be able to enjoy the dainty antics of your pet, for the jerboa is a nocturnal animal and spends its day in resting.

At home in its native Egypt, the jerboa sleeps by day almost buried in the sand. In his cage over here in England your jerboa must be able to play at being in the desert. Sand should be spread over the floor of the cage to a depth of two inches, and into this sand the small creature will contentedly burrow. The sand must be changed fairly frequently, or the jerboa's fur will begin to come off and skin troubles set in.

We have spoken of that small parrot the budgerigar. Then there is a small cockatoo, called a cockatiel. This is quite hardy

out of doors, and thrives best in an aviary where it has plenty of space. Cockatiels do not bathe, but they much enjoy a shower of rain. Owing to this circumstance some owners give them a periodical watering with tepid water from a watering-can. A testimonial to the gentle disposition of the cockatiel is that it can be kept with birds that are smaller than itself. For all that, it is a bird that has no scruples about biting when handled, and it can give quite a nasty nip. Food consists of ordinary bird-seeds, and a certain amount of oats and paddy rice. It is a lover of all kinds of green food. Although not a fluent speaker, as one may say, the cockatiel may, without much trouble, be taught to talk.

Should you possess a vivarium it is astonishing to note, now that trade in live stock is resumed, what a number of possible inmates of it there are for you to select from. In proof of that it may be mentioned that the items set out below have been chosen practically haphazard from a total number of nearly one hundred.

Grass snakes, dice snakes, horse-shoe snakes, whip snakes, cat snakes, smooth snakes, vipers, long-nosed vipers, sand vipers and horned vipers. Eyed lizards, blue-headed beauty lizards, wall lizards, spine-footed lizards, sand lizards, hog-nosed skinks, glass skinks, slow-worms, grey monitors, slender-footed geckos, chameleons. Water tortoises and terrapins. Giant edible frogs, painted frogs, green tree frogs, giant toads, natterjack toads, changeable toads, spade-footed toad-frogs, marbled newts, chameleon-tongued newts and English tritons.

That is a weird-sounding list, is it not? And after perusing it will not a pleasing change be afforded if we make some reference to that universal favourite, the canary?

If you are going in for a canary, you should obtain one of a good breed. Our selection would be either a Yorkshire, a Scotch fancy, a Buff, a crested Norwich, a Lizard, a Lancashire cobby, a Cinnamon, or any canary that was a good sweet singer without being a German roller. England exports canaries all over the world, and we have no need to go abroad to obtain a first-rate bird.

Bear in mind that the smallest cage to contain one canary should have minimum measurements of: length, 13 inches; width, 9 inches; height, 13½ inches. Never have a round cage. All perches should be readily removable for cleaning, and should be at least half-inch ones. Small perches cause cramp. From time to time your canary may require to have its claws cut, and this is a little operation that you should learn to carry out in the proper way. The bird's feet should be soaked in a saucer of warm water. Then, with a sharp pair

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of short scissors, carefully cut the claws, but be sure not to cut within a quarter of an inch of the little red vein that runs up each claw.

And do you know why a piece of cuttle-fish bone is to be seen often fixed in the wires of a canary's cage? The bird likes to peck and grate away at the hard, raspy cuttle-fish, because that process wears down the upper mandible of the beak, which is otherwise apt to grow too long. Then it may require to be carefully cut, which is not a pleasant operation. Therefore, include cuttle-fish bone amongst the other outfit of your canary.

Already I have suggested goldfish to you as pets. Silver carp, are, of course, very much the same. Two or three other denizens of an aquarium may be mentioned. Even now, supplies are still very uncertain. But somewhere or other you may be able to get sun-fish, moon-fish, cat-fish, dog-fish and thunder-fish. Roach, dace, tench, carp and trout are home products, as are also sticklebacks and minnows. I kept eels for quite a long time in an aquarium, till one day a hot sun managed to strike on it, and the eels wriggled over the top and away in search of a less tepid home, which, unfortunately, they did not find. Then there are Japanese sacred two-tailed fish and Chinese bronze fan-tailed telescope fish.

Not long since, by the way, I saw in the catalogue of a live-stock dealer a list of reptiles that included two lizards, four snakes, chameleons, land and water tortoises and frogs. And underneath the list was printed the assurance, "All the above are now popular Pets for Ladies."

To make my survey of possible pets more complete, I will briefly refer to our British cage-birds. And if you should inquire why I do not mention them at any great length, I will explain that in my opinion no wild bird should be kept confined in a cage. Their little souls, like their songs, are meant to be free.

There are the gold-finch, song thrush, blackbird, skylark, bull-finch, chaffinch, green-finch, and linnet. Also the starling, jay, magpie, jackdaw. There are others, but those will here suffice. Some people, as I know, will keep even a nightingale or a blackcap warbler in a cage. The thing can be done, but we will not encourage it.

In addition to the budgerigars and cockatiels above noticed, there are a few other foreign birds that thrive well in aviaries and some in cages. Amongst them are avadavats, waxbills, rice-birds, cutthroats, weavers and mannikins. Much beyond the confines of that inventory it is not wise to go. In buying foreign birds you should stick closely to the well-known and well-tried kinds. Otherwise you may find yourself in possession of some unfamiliar pet, beautiful maybe, but

concerning which no one get-at-able can tell you what it feeds on or how it should be treated. And then, naturally enough, you will not be in possession of it long.

Some girls who are fond of animals rather yearn after more uncommon pets. They will be wise if they first of all qualify as successful keepers of more everyday animals. To tend and feed and generally look after an animal is a good portion of an education in itself. Therefore, every girl ought to have, or have had, her own canary, or guinea-pig, or rabbit, or fancy mouse. A dog offers the best practical test of all, but cats somehow manage to get along very well without much "mothering."

As will be noticed, I have, as is indeed customary, given a very wide interpretation to the word pet. A pet may be said to be any live creature that we keep, in confinement or otherwise, for the purpose of affording us amusement, entertainment, and occupation in the study of its ways and habits. That being so, there are many so-called pets that we should not have the least idea of actually petting. We should not dream of nursing them on our laps, and patting and stroking them. And, likely enough, they would not dream of allowing us to do so, not at least without vigorous protest of tooth or beak and claws.

Such being the situation, it is for you to decide when selecting a pet whether you must have one that at will you can safely caress and fondle. If, however, you ask me for my own opinion, I would say that a pet of that description is the only *real* pet for a girl. And being a person who in his time has received some distinct surprises from ungrateful wild creatures that were absolutely determined to avoid being turned into pets, I would strongly advise you not to make rash experiments. After all, the confiding companionship of any docile, well-meaning animal friend is of itself a thing well worth the having. Extraordinary pets may prove to have extraordinary ways. As, you will remember, was instanced by the case of the lady who "adopted" a tiger.

Uncle Peter's Visitors

And What Happened Through a Heron's Egg

BY HELEN M. TURNER

THERE was really no reason why the first part of our visit to Uncle Peter should have been characterised by such a series of misfortunes.

To begin with, surely no place could have been more ideal for two boys to spend a Whitsuntide holiday than was "Flowerdale Lodge." For it was situated within a few hundred yards of a lake, on which there were both an island and a boat, and its grounds included everything that the heart of youth most loves—dark mysterious shrubberies, wide smooth lawns, and last but not least—a well-stocked fruit and vegetable garden.

Moreover, we had really meant to behave as well as we knew how, during our visit.

"You'll try not to be noisy and wild," mother cautioned us, when she saw us off at Paddington; "remember that your great-uncle is an old man, and remember also how good he has always been to us all."

And we really did try and remember.

"It was Uncle Peter who gave us that ripping cricket set and mother her fur coat last winter," I kept repeating to myself, when my heart and spirits began to sink before the stern expression and searching eyes of our great-uncle.

Phil, I know, also tried to remember our uncle's generosity; but alas, the shyness he felt for our somewhat forbidding relative rendered him terribly nervous and awkward, and the very first night he upset his soup all over the dinner-table.

Uncle Peter said nothing, but I saw his eye-brows contract, and there was an ominous silence during the rest of the meal. Afterwards I heard him telling Simpson, the old butler, to give us supper in future in the housekeeper's room, "as——" and then he stopped, but I knew that he had meant to say "as they do not know how to behave in the dining-room."

The next day there was more trouble in store for us.

In our little garden at Wimbledon we were accustomed to pull any flowers or pick any fruit there was. Indeed, since father had died, Phil and I had practically looked after the garden ourselves; and it was supposed to be our special domain. But when we went into the well-stocked garden at "Flowerdale" and began, not only to pick any early fruit or flowers we could see, but to remove from the paths a few stray weeds, the wrath of the gardener, Parsons, knew no bounds. "If we had been trying to murder the horrid old thing, he could not have roared louder," Phil protested angrily. "I feel like complaining about him to Uncle Peter."

But alas, it was Parsons who got in his word of complaint first—and in future the garden was locked against our incursions. A few days later we found the door of the stables locked against us as well. For, on Phil declaring that he could drive (he had once driven a donkey cart when we were spending a holiday at Hastings), we were allowed to take out Uncle Peter's pony and governess cart. The result of our expedition may be easily pictured. At the end of a quarter of an hour, we found ourselves head-downwards in a ditch, while along the road Snowball, the pony, was careering, her cart swinging dangerously behind her.

"They're no fit to go about without a keeper," the old Scots coachman exclaimed angrily, when late in the afternoon Snowball was returned to her stables with bleeding knees and a much damaged cart.

And I believe Uncle Peter shared his opinion a few days later. He was showing us his much-prized collection of bird's eggs when I let the case containing the heron's egg fall and shattered it in a thousand pieces on the ground.

"And I don't know when I will get another one," he exclaimed, as he eyed in dismay the broken shell; "for I'm too old now to go creeping about over the island in search of one!"

And though, during the following days, the doors of the garden, stable and Uncle Peter's study being shut against us, we could no longer do any serious damage, a series of minor misdeeds were attributed to us. The housemaid complained that we made the stair-carpets dirty with our muddy boots, and cook that we ate them all out of house and home.

"I'm simply sick of being grumbled about," Phil declared. "I think even if we did nothing but twirl our thumbs they would find something wrong in it."

"Don't you think we might write to mother, and ask her to send for us to come home?" I suggested brightly.

"She would be in an awful way, if we did," Phil answered doubtfully; "anyway, let's wait till after Saturday. Harold, the garden boy, says there's a 'roundabout' coming to the village on Saturday." "But we'll just get blamed for going on it," I protested; nevertheless, I gave in—and before Saturday came something quite unexpected happened.

I was passing the library door, when I heard Smith, the man who attended to Uncle Peter's poultry, in conversation with our uncle. Instinctively I knew he, like every one else, was complaining of our behaviour, yet what he could grumble about I was at a loss to know. Without thinking I stopped to listen. Blame me if you will, but the temptation was too strong to resist.

"The hen run is broken to pieces, and two of the best fowls gone. Parsons is as sure as I am, that it must be the young gentlemen that have done it." Smith's voice sounded determined.

"I tell you I don't believe my great-nephews would do such a thing," Uncle Peter answered firmly. "I don't deny that they are wild and high-spirited—most school-boys are—but as for being really naughty or dishonest, why, I myself would be as capable of stealing as they would be!"

I stood transfixed with astonishment. Not on account of being blamed for doing something of which we were entirely innocent, but at our great-uncle defending us in such a way—he who, we believed, thought us capable of any wickedness. Phil must know how we had misjudged him. I turned and ran upstairs, but my brother was not in our room. A moment later, however, he entered, and I saw by his face that he had also some interesting news to impart, and being the eldest and possessed of the strongest voice he managed to tell his story first.

"What do you think! Harold tells me that the police round here have got word that the convicts (who escaped from Portland Gaol a week ago) are hiding somewhere near here"; he paused to hear my exclamation of astonishment, but as you know my thoughts were occupied with my own discovery. And I intervened at once.

"I don't think we'll write to mother, after all, to send for us. The old boy doesn't hate us half as much as we thought," and I related the conversation that I had overheard in the library. "We'll just have to show him that we really are decent," I added. "I wonder how we can do it?" Then an idea came to me.

"What do you say to us getting him another heron's egg, to make up for the one I broke? For he said, you know, that he was too old to go and look for another himself."

"But how can we get one?" Phil asked.

"He said there were plenty to be found on the island."

"How are we to get there?" Phil again objected.

"By the boat, of course. I saw the way Simpson opened the door of the boat-house when he took us for a row the other day."

"But if they find us, they'll just say we oughtn't to have gone out in the boat by ourselves."

"Nobody will know that we've gone. We'll wait till it's almost dark—till Uncle Peter is dressing for dinner—and all the men are back home."

"But that's just the time I promised Harold to go and help to look for those convicts. Anyone who finds them will get ever so much money he says."

"Well, you can go after we've got the egg," I suggested.

Being less adventurous than Phil, the idea of pursuing two able-bodied and desperate men did not appeal to me.

Phil gave in reluctantly. "All right, we must be as quick as we can," he said.

We waited, as I had proposed, till twilight was beginning to fall; then we stole out, and down the path to the lake. It was more difficult to open the boat-house door than I had imagined; moreover, being unused to handling any kind of boat, it was some time before we found ourselves with the bow of our craft directed towards the island.

The crossing on that side was quite short, and we soon grounded the boat on a pebbly beach, attaching it firmly by a rope to a tree trunk. "The heron nests are among the larches on the other side, Simpson said," I told Phil—and we made our way across the island. Once we heard the sound of breaking branches and crackling leaves. "Whatever can it be?" Phil said; "there are no deer here. Could one of the dogs have swum over?" But we did not stop to investigate, for it was momentarily growing darker.

Finding the desired egg was more difficult than I imagined, for the nests were among thick undergrowth, but I found it at last; and we began to retrace our footsteps. What was our consternation, when we got back to the beach, to find our boat gone!

"I tied it up ever so tight," Phil protested, "it simply can't have got loose."

"Well it must have, for there's nobody here who could have taken it," I replied crossly, for without the boat how were we to get home? And if we did not return, and lost his boat as well, whatever would Uncle Peter say!

Then suddenly Phil clutched my arm. "Look," he said, "look!" And I looked. Gliding into the gathering shadows I saw our boat, and it was not empty! There were two men in it.

"It can't be Smith or Parsons, can it?" I suggested.

"Of course, it's not," Phil answered, and then suddenly he clapped his hands. "It's the convicts, and we must go after them."

"But how can we?" I expostulated, "when they've taken our boat? And if we did, most likely they would shoot us." As I said before, I was not of so courageous a temperament as was Phil.

He, however, was not listening to me. "Look," he said, "they're making straight for the house. I expect they're going to burgle the old boy's things and most likely murder him, if we don't stop them."

"Oh," I interrupted, "I've broken the egg!" For in my agitation I had forgotten that I was holding it and had crushed it between my fingers.

"Don't bother about that, you silly! Haven't I told you we must save Uncle Peter?"

"But how are we going to save him, when we are stuck on this island?"

"Well, surely, there is something on which we can get across. These fellows must have used something when they came." I nodded; and we turned back to search for some raft or large piece of wood. We had to walk twice round the island before we found anything, and then it was only a log with two branches on it, which the late visitors there must have used as oars.

On this, however, we set forth on our return voyage; but as I have said before we were not adept oarsmen, and before we had made half the journey, our unsteady craft had overturned—upsetting us both into the lake. Fortunately it was much less deep than we had believed it to be; and with difficulty we managed to wade to the bank. But we were wet to the skin, and I, at least, was exhausted both in body and spirit.

"What do you want us to do now?" I asked Phil wearily.

"Hurry up. Why, they must be nearly at the house by now, so it's useless to try and warn the people there. We must run down the avenue to the village and tell the police."

"But it's so dark, and they may jump out on us and kill us," I protested.

"Don't be a coward," Phil answered angrily, "come on." And I went, but my heart was beating far quicker than my legs were moving. Any moment I expected to have a rough hand laid on my shoulder, or, worse still, a bullet through my heart.

Never was there a more welcome sight than were the white gates of the avenue to me—for beyond them lay the village, and in the village there would be no fear of attack.

Once, however, we had arrived at the police station we had considerable difficulty in persuading the sergeant-in-charge of the genuineness of our discovery.

Perhaps it was not surprising ; for a more bedraggled and utterly disreputable looking pair of small boys it would have been difficult to find ; and I don't believe we should have succeeded in arousing his real interest, had not a man, who chanced to come in, recognised us as the squire's nephews.

"They're the young gentlemen all right ; though they mayn't look it. You had better go with them at once. I'll come, and I know another score of chaps who will."

It was well they did, for we did not arrive at the manor a minute too soon.

Phil was right ; the escaped convicts (finding no doubt their supplies and money exhausted) had meant to rob my uncle ; and had actually got the length of breaking into the pantry, and removing some valuable pieces of plate, while the butler was busy serving our great-uncle with dinner. We caught them just as they were getting down from the window.

The rest does not take long to tell. Before an hour was over the burglars were safely locked up in the village police station. While we—well, we were the heroes of the hour. All our former misdeeds were forgotten—indeed, those who had been loudest in their complaints of us were now the first to praise us.

As soon as we had changed, Uncle Peter insisted that we should have late dinner in the dining-room, for the first time since Phil's unfortunate accident !

"But what puzzles me still is why you were on the island at such an hour !" he said, after we had told him the story of our chase.

"We were getting you another heron's egg, to make up for the one I had broken."

And, strange to say, the fact that we had gone in search of something we knew he wanted (though he never got the egg), seemed to please our uncle more than the fact that we had saved his silver and perhaps his life also.

“My Mr. Mark”

A Story of Queen Anne’s Days

BY G. GODFRAY SELICK

THE days were all sunny and filled with happiness in our old home until the stranger came.

I recall him as readily as if he were but this moment gone from us : his portly figure that suited so ill the gay dress covering it ; his flaxen wig which always attracted my eyes ; the taffety patch stuck upon his red chin ; and the feather edging around his hat which he wore defiantly tilted over one eye. His bright blue coat was never clean from powder, and his flashy cane always dangled by a loop from one of its buttons.

At sight of me, dressed simply in an ash-coloured gown, he pretended an o’erwhelming astonishment and delight.

“Impossible !” he exclaimed, throwing up his big hands. “Do my eyes trick me ? Can it be that so pretty a flower blossoms in this dusty corner of a house ?”

With mistrust in my mind I nervously took up my playbook and ran from him to my loved seat on the garden wall between the two chestnut trees. Here it was I delighted to sit, idly watching the narrow little byway that ran along beneath my dangling feet, and dreaming most wonderful day-dreams.

Few steps ever sounded in that little gullet of a byway, other than the River Company’s water-carrier with his swinging buckets of dancing water. And, oh dear ! how tiredly he walked. Once, though, I had seen a raree-showman pass along ; and, again, a merry fiddler who came there and, seeing me upon the wall, began to play and to leap to and fro so funnily. I remember that I jumped back into the garden and there, slyly, danced to his playing.

Mr. Rogan—for that was the name of the stranger—came on a day in summer, at the time when good Queen Anne lay dying. Every moment of Mr. Rogan’s stay with us I remember well, but, above all, I remember how impatiently I longed for his departure. While he stayed and swaggered in the house a gloom sat upon it as if he pressed

a heavy hand down upon its spirit. My mother passed many hours of those days weeping and my father in fretting and fuming.

Florence, my sister, who was a toast of my Lord Rowden's, came upon me one morning sitting in deep thought. My questions to her brought me but sharp, unsisterly replies and a command to go play, for that I was certainly dreaming. She declared that neither gloom nor trouble did she observe in the house.

In the meanwhile I beheld Mr. Rogan—Mr. Edward Deering Rogan, as he introduced himself to me—rapidly making himself master of house and household. I saw my father's spirit sinking beneath his influence. Nevertheless, I was able to retire to the garden wall and there quickly forget him, and his effect, in fancies and play.

I was destined, however, to feel his influence as surely as did the other members of the family.

One evening—a dull, dusky evening it was, I remember—I heard sudden bursts of rapid and loud voices rising from the withdrawing-room below. Out of curiosity I went down the stairs and pushed open the door and entered.

I saw my father, very pale of face and staring of eye, faced by Mr. Rogan, who had clearly lost hold of his temper.

“How long do ye ask me to wait?” demanded Mr. Rogan, leaning across the table on his knuckled red hands.

“I am minded to let you wait for ever,” replied my father, yet feebly, as though he feared the man.

Instantly, Mr. Rogan leaped upright. He stamped round the table and stood face to face with my father.

“If that is to be your song,” he said slowly, “then I shall act speedy.”

“No,” cried out my father to my amazement, and sat down limply on a chair.

“I tell ye it must be ‘yes,’” cried Mr. Rogan. “I will not wait ‘till to-night even. I will act now. D’ye mind me?”

My father glanced up at him and, as if he perceived no kindness in the fellow's face, lowered his own face into his hands.

Then it was that, urged by some daring and courage, I moved into the room and stamped my small foot, with all my little strength, upon Mr. Rogan's pretty shoe.

“Go away, you are hurting my father,” I cried sternly.

“Smoke me!” he cried, and laughed merrily at my boldness, although I felt that his pride was hurt. “’Tis little Mistress Sweetlips. Did ye tread upon me, madam? Did ye forget your manners and behave like a slut out of St. Giles?”

Thereupon he sat down and lifted me on to his knees. And the expression in his eyes terrified me, as I suspect 'twas intended to do.

“Oh! You hurt me,” I cried.

“Come, now—you are jesting,” he said whimsically, and hurt me still more.

My father rose sharply then to take me from him. Swiftly Mr. Rogan set me down and stood up before him.

“Mr. Compton,” he said sternly. “This chit has a deal to learn. I would recommend that you begin with the teaching now.”

'Twas useless for me to be sullen and to dally with them. I was compelled eventually, on my father's bidding, to apologise slowly to Mr. Rogan.

“Pray pardon me, Mr. Rogan, for my clumsiness——”

Mr. Rogan himself interrupted my plea here by coughing and glancing away from me. My father chided me for my tiresomeness. And, in the end, I was perforced to “desire Mr. Rogan's kind forgiveness of my rudeness.”

As soon as I was released by them I went out of the room, in a great rage, away to the garden wall where I sat a full hour kicking my heels against the stones.

But, inwardly, I knew that Mr. Rogan had terrified me also.

An hour passed, as I have told you, while I gave my mind up to sulky reflection. But at the end of it I heard a very pleasing voice talking up to me from the narrow bypath beneath.

“La! And who lodged you up there, pray?” it asked.

Looking down, I beheld a very pretty gentleman regarding me and awaiting my reply. There was the oddest of little dimples in his cheek, and a light like moon-sparkles in his eyes. He was certainly amused, I gathered, yet I sensed also an air of friendliness about him. He was big too—and strong—and so much unlike Mr. Rogan in every way that I felt no nervous fear of him at all.

“You know, I would like to climb up an' sit there beside you,” he said queerly. “Oh; in faith! I can climb. Will you not move and spare me some room?”

In a breath he was actually sitting by my side and glancing at the pages in my playbook. He even read parts of it to me and told me so much more than the book contained that we were quickly confidential friends.

When he was about to leap down to the path again he desired me to tell him my name.

“I am Mistress Lucy Compton,” I said proudly. “I live in this house. And what is your name? Have you one?”

“Oh, yes,” he said. “Let me think. I cannot have forgotten my own name. Of course, it is Mark. That is it. But now I must bid Mistress Lucy Compton a good den. Also, I would desire her to have a care not to tumble down from the wall.”

“Good den, Mr. Mark,” I said graciously.

I sat there until he had turned out of the byway, then raced, with cheeks flushed with happiness, into the house. I hugged my secret friend to myself too, deciding not to tell any person 'soever about him—my Mr. Mark.

From that happy moment the ugly influence of Mr. Rogan, his foppishness and brutality, weakened in my mind. As day followed day it faded still more, and the memory of Mr. Mark's laughing face, as he had sat with me on the wall, grew clearer and bolder in it.

Again and again my new friend came along the little backway and talked and played with me there, so that I came to know at what hour to watch for him. And one morning he brought a piece of cinnamon silk ribbon and fastened it in my hair. Even now I can recall his enjoyment of my reception of his gift. I was stunned with delight so that I could not speak my thanks to him.

“Sh—,” he whispered slyly. “Hide it away. Let no one else set eyes on it. 'Tis our own, our very own secret.”

He added, very quietly and mysteriously, “Should ye wish me to come an' play, or”—he seemed to add, with a trifle of emphasis—“if ye should want me to do something to help you, ye need but to lay this piece of ribbon here, on the wall, an I'll be with you ere you can cross the garden to the house.”

'Twas a strange piece of advice, I thought, since that same night Mr. Rogan chose to burst into the house again and to seize his old power over my thoughts. 'Twas a dreadful night to close so happy a day, and, ere it was past, Mr. Rogan had terrified me so that I dared not even cry out my fear.

I remember how, before midnight, I was wrenched out of a deep sleep by the sound of many voices below stairs battling in an angry quarrel. Mr. Rogan's voice rose above the din like that of the bully he was. I was not only scared, but amazed that he should be in the house at so late an hour.

Trembling, as if it were a cold winter night, I crept quietly down the dark stairway and silently pushed open the door of the withdrawing-room far enough to allow me a view of the folk within. Mr. Rogan was raging dreadfully, stamping wildly to and fro and banging with his cane upon the chairs and table as he passed them.

My father was standing near the table as still as stone, while on the window-seat, crouching and weeping, sat my mother.

"'Tis madness to fancy that I will be denied," Mr. Rogan cried at the moment when I looked into the room. "Ye refuse me the money?"

"Until now I have weakly surrendered too much," said father. "You would rob us of our last crown piece."

"An' you would rather this Mohock son of yours passes the rest of his days in Bridewell prison?" said Mr. Rogan. "Your crowns will be well used if they keep him out of the place—an' they will for me. But I've talked enough. You have refused; and I, who know his crimes and where he is to be taken, will see to it that taken he is. And you," he added scornfully, "can save him, yet ye think rather of your crowns."

"I have given you my answer," said father calmly.

"Parbleu! Why should ye be so hasty, Mr. Compton?" said the rogue in a new, wheedling voice. "I will grant ye time. Until to-morrow evening let it be. Your word then will be your son's fate—and little I care as to it. Mark it, Mr. Compton. I cannot spare time to watch your tricks."

Thereupon he stamped out of the room, and I was spun aside to fall at full length upon the floor of the hall as he swept against me, and past.

It was old John, our servant, who lifted me to my feet again, and soothed me. He led me away into his own small room round the corner of the upper stairs, and there he made a deal of fuss of me.

"John," I asked him. "Have I a brother?"

"La! Now, what shall I be telling the poor miss—what shall I?" he groaned, throwing his eyes upwards. "A brother, she asks me. . . . Ay, Mistress Lucy. You have a brother, ne'er a doubt of it. A good lad, too, and mighty missed in this house."

"Where is he—John?" I asked him.

"Where is he?" he repeated my words. "Ay, where, by the seven kings!"

"Mr. Rogan knows," I said.

"Mr. Rogan is a cheat, Mistress. A leech," he cried, "an' I'd not believe in a word his wicked tongue speaks. If it be he knows, he'd ne'er give us the news. Your brother ran away from this very house, into the snow it were, I remember me; an' where he wended his steps old John have oft set out to find. There were no tracks of him, though—no tracks. But old John will ne'er have it that he've turned scamp."

"Why did he run away, an' leave me, John?" I asked the old fellow.

He shook his head gloomily.

"'Twere wrong. He were wrong. Though fur that, so were the master," he said stoutly. "They quarrelled together, an' the boy ran off an' were gone like a wisp of smoke. If he have sorrowed for that night's hastiness as much as the master have, then he is a joyless lad. Well-a-me!"

Ere he led me back to my own room I had learned enough to understand that my foolish runaway brother was in real peril. Mr. Rogan truly intended to work him harm the next night, unless——

Unless!

All through the next morning I went solemnly through and about the house, declining play and thinking, instead, very hard. Till by noon came the wonderful thought to me that perhaps Mr. Mark—my Mr. Mark—could assist me in thinking upon a way past the danger.

Thereupon I ran to the foot of the garden and laid, as he had bid me, the piece of cinnamon silk ribbon upon the wall, between the two rustling chestnut trees. Truly, it was a wonderful ribbon, for the first person to walk that way even while I waited there, was Mr. Mark himself. He came directly to the wall and took down the cinnamon ribbon.

"You see," he said pleasantly. "The message was whispered to me by a little brown sparrow that the ribbon awaited me here. So here I am! My word! we are solemn to-day."

His last words unlocked my tongue and I told him all. I told him of my brother, whom I had never seen, of Mr. Rogan and his wickedness and spite, of my parents' deep trouble. And when I came to an end of my chatter, and breathless, he smiled at me.

"Mr. Rogan will not harm your brother," he said softly.

"He will," I said. "He has vowed to do so."

"An' I vow that he will not," he said, and still smiling. "Now, why! Who is that old fellow that has come out of the house?" he asked suddenly. "He stoops sadly."

"That is old John," I said. "He has lived with us always."

"Faith! He seems a homely looking soul," he said. "Will ye do what I ask, Mistress Lucy? Run to old John, stay with him and gossip with him. And," he whispered, "remember that I have vowed your brother shall not be harmed by Mr. Rogan."

Thereupon he went away.

Throughout the afternoon I watched old John while he worked, and talked with him. I taught my mind to believe that Mr. Rogan would

not carry his threat through since my Mr. Mark could not make a mistake. But when at last the sun began to drop down to the roofs, as it did in a big yellow ball, my fear of Mr. Rogan and of his spite returned again.

And when, at last, his step and loud voice sounded in the hall, I began to tremble with new alarm. He entered straightaway the room where my father sat calmly reading, and with an arrogant stamping walk, which seemed to brag of his strength, drew attention. At that moment I truly believed my brother to be lost.

I had followed him meekly and watched him fling his cane down upon the table with a great clatter. Then he pushed his hat to the back of his head, filled a pipe with tobacco, and fell to smoking. Smoking his evil tobacco, and wearing his hat in our withdrawing-room !

My father placed the book he had been reading down on the table and calmly glanced up at him.

“I trust your mind is different now, Mr. Compton ?” said Mr. Rogan at last.

“I have not sought for a reason to alter it,” replied father, quietly, yet firmly.

It is altogether past my skill in description to set down here a true picture of Mr. Rogan in the fit of uncontrolled rage which my father’s reply caused in him. Also, I shrink from attempting it. I remember how that I whimpered with fear and pressed back into a corner of the room and watched him, as he stamped to and fro before me, pouring out his coarse speech which was full of ill intention towards us all.

I remember, too, how in the loudest outburst of his raving the door opened and old John came into the room and stood as if spellbound, surveying the scene. Neither of us gave more than a swift glance at the old and bent figure standing there, for we were helplessly enchained by Mr. Rogan’s terrible manner.

I was amazed, therefore, when presently old John shuffled across to the table, picked up Mr. Rogan’s cane which seemed to be flaunting us all there, snapped it in two and threw the pieces into the fireplace.

His unexpected effrontery gave Mr. Rogan a stunning shock. The bragging tongue fell silent and, in the pause, we beheld the old fellow proceed to further startling behaviour. We beheld the pipe suddenly shivered out of Mr. Rogan’s hand, then his gaudy feathered hat struck from his head.

Thereupon, the bully recovered his wits. A fresh storm of epithets broke from his mouth, but this time, and naturally, upon the bowed head of the old serving-man.

But Mr. Rogan's words were brief this time. He raised his hand to strike the meddling old fellow to the floor. I covered my face with my hands not to witness the blow ; but not before I had seen John courageously stiffen himself in defiance of the threat.

Next I heard someone cry out an exclamation, peeped out between my fingers, and saw the old fellow leap suddenly forward and clasp the braggart tightly around the body.

It was Mr. Rogan who had called out, and with reason ! Next instant he was actually lifted off his feet and flung with a crash into the fireplace where the pieces of his elegant cane lay already.

But old John was changed ! Indeed, he was no longer old—no longer John ! He stood upright, and was big and smiling. His hands clutched his sides jauntily and he broke into a laugh loud enough to be heard far down the Fleet stream.

I could scarce believe my eyes ; although with a cry of laughing happiness I ran across to him. For he was my Mr. Mark !

My father was hurrying towards him, too, and with an astounding cry on his lips.

“Mark ! My son, Mark,” he cried, again and again.

And my mother came and clung to his hand and kissed it fondly.

Mr. Rogan picked himself up and slowly recovered his senses, while we all pressed round my brother in the middle of the withdrawing-room. Old John came in, too, laughing wheezily and rubbing his hands for very delight.

Then Mr. Rogan moved slyly towards the door. Ere he reached it, however, Mark had broken from us and intercepted him.

“Back,” he said sternly. “This gentleman, father, has for many years been a noble terror-maker in the night streets. He is a nobleman by right of birth, but a Mohock for sport. A short way from here, a month ago, it was my happy fortune to cheat him of his sport, which was the scaring of a sweet and gentle lady. In the face of his pack of rogues I shamed him with my sword and compelled him to beg for her mercy. For that he vowed openly in every tavern and coffee house to take revenge upon me. And this was his chosen manner of taking it. 'Tis a noble plan, in faith, for a gentleman of the court ; yet it fits him well. He has lied to you as to my habits and fashion of living. Ask of the merchants in the City if ye would learn the truth of me. La ! He is a pitiful fool. . . . Now, Mr. Rogan—or shall I give you your rightful name ? . . . You are urgently desirous to begone ! Well, I myself will conduct you to the door. John, fetch candles ; else we shall have our ‘noble’ guest stumbling, his limbs are already quaking so.”

It seemed an age while Mr. Rogan departed under my brother's

guidance, and it was ended at last by old John stumbling excitedly in upon us.

“ Master,” he cried gasping. “ Mr. Mark have run him through—in the garden—over agen the wall by the chestnuts ! ”

“ Tut ! Don't be alarmed, mother,” said Mark himself, appearing laughing at that moment in the doorway. “ I have but scratched him. 'Tis enough to wound deeply so poor a creature. John, you rogue ! where are my clothes ? You will scarce believe, father, what a rascal of a fellow is this John. He has deceived you. Oh, indeed he has. During the whole of this week he has come to me out there upon Heavy Hill with a recount of that rogue's progress here. And, to-night, he makes me don these fal-de-rals of his. Here, you rascal ! let me get out of them.”

When, later, he returned to the room dressed as I had known him—when he was once again my Mr. Mark—he lifted me up and asked me in a whisper for the cinnamon ribbon.

And, next moment, he was tying and arranging it in my hair.

The Fancy Dress Ball

What Rita Dunstan Had to Do with It

BY FLORENCE M. BURDITT

PRAYERS were just over in Grey Towers School when Rita Dunstan rose. She was head girl, and spokesman for the rest.

"Miss Hadland, will you please accept this for your birthday with our love?" handing her a white cardboard box.

The Principal lifted out a sumptuous blue leather handbag, with silver fittings, and rose to reply, the sun shining on her glorious coppery-gold hair, but Rita said softly—

"Please—one minute. Trixie, come here."

Trixie Ruston, the youngest boarder, strutted up the room behind an enormous bunch of flowers, her black curls, surmounted by an immense bow, bobbing at each step. A ripple of laughter followed her, and Rita lifted her up on to the platform.

"My dear girls, this is an unexpected pleasure! I am charmed with this lovely present, and of course I must show my gratitude. There will be a half-holiday to-day, and no lessons this evening."

"Oh, please, Miss Hadland, do you think we could have a fancy dress ball, in honour of the day?"

"Certainly, if the girls would like it. But I must stipulate that nobody shall spend more than—say, two shillings on her costume. See what you can do with that. We will meet here at seven o'clock this evening, for our ball."

There was a perfect storm of applause, and cheers were given for Miss Hadland.

"Oh Rita, you sport! What made you think of the ball?" asked the girls afterwards.

"A brain-wave!" she laughed. "I'm going to ask the Prinny if she will lend us some properties."

Rita's request was heartily granted, for Miss Hadland understood and loved the girls.

The Fancy Dress Ball

"Hilda Brandon's uncle, who is staying in the town for the weekend, has heard of the ball," said the Principal. "He promises to give the supper, and has offered prizes for the three best dresses."

Then what a rushing about and tearing up and down stairs there was! The properties which had been left from various entertainments were laid out in a classroom, and the girls helped themselves. Rita was going to wear a gorgeous kimono, which had just been given her as a dressing-gown. So she went from one to another, making suggestions, lending articles, and putting in stitches with delightful impartiality.

"I thought I could use this, but I don't know what to be," wailed Kathleen Cosway, holding out a pale green frock. Rita studied it, then cried, "I know! Let down your hair and be a dryad," pointing to Kathleen's Titian-red mane. "See—a girdle of moss—a wreath of those bronze-green ivy leaves—and oh, it will be topping! I'll fetch the moss."

Returning laden from the kitchen garden, she caught sight of a gloomy-faced girl wandering out aimlessly.

"Here, Una," she cried, "help me carry these up."

The dark-eyed junior took the moss and leaves, and Rita, taking them at Kathleen's door, dismissed her with thanks, then showed her chum how to use them.

"I say, Rita, help me too. I haven't anything suitable," said Mona Thaxley. "Look—a *crêpe-de-chine* blouse—and that's all. No money, either," she groaned.

"Well, drape that sheet round you, and go as Peace. Here, I'll show you. And there's a fillet in the classroom that'll just do."

About half-past six, Rita, looking charming in her kimono, with tiny fans in her black hair, was coming along a corridor which had classrooms on either side. Glancing into one of them, she caught sight of a small, solitary figure huddled up in a corner. She stopped and spoke.

"Una Thurstan—what are you doing here?" She went up to the child. "Come, hurry. You'll be late for the ball." She laid a hand on the other's shoulder, looking into the averted face.

"I'm not going," muttered Una, twitching herself away.

Rita sat down. Here was something to be attended to.

"Why aren't you going?" Her gentle though compelling hand was laid on the child's arm.

Una hung her head. "Nobody wants me—and I've nothing to wear."

"Nobody?—that's not true. I heard a girl in your Form say 'I'd

love to be friends with Una Thurstan, but she won't let me.' Don't forget, Una—if you would have friends, you must show yourself friendly."

No answer, but Rita saw a tear steal down the sullen cheek. She guessed at the sore heart of this shy newcomer, and a great pity welled up within her.

"Have you thought how rude you will be, if you stay away from Miss Hadland's birthday party?"

This was a new idea. Una shuffled and twisted.

"Well, I can't go, anyhow. I've nothing to wear, and no money."

Rita thought hard for a minute. Then she cried imperatively—

"I can make you look ripping in no time. Come!"

A gleam of hope filled the black eyes. Rita smiled. "Quick!" she said.

The child followed eagerly to Rita's room. Dashing to her locker, the elder girl drew out a handsome bathing suit of dark blue, consisting of a tunic and knickers.

"Jump into this—you'll make a fine Roman soldier. There's a helmet and dagger in the cloak-room. I'll fetch them."

She was back directly with a gilt helmet and a wooden dagger, to find Una struggling excitedly into her toga, with a crimson face, and eyes like starlit pools of blackness. Rita brushed out her crop of short black hair, then carefully crowned her with the helmet.

The effect was magical. "You do look topping! Now for the dagger. Now then, your dancing sandals and some white socks."

When Una returned, Rita cried admiringly—

"I say, you're simply fine! Now come. But just a moment—be jolly and decent to others, and they'll be nice to you." Seizing her hand, the younger girl kissed it with silent, passionate fervour.

The Lecture Hall was a gay scene, with its groups of excited, chattering girls. Glancing round, Rita piloted Una to a dainty little Alice in Wonderland, who looked very demure.

"Here, child, this is a particular friend of mine—a Roman soldier. Mind you look after each other," and only waiting to hear Alice's delighted comments on the handsome boy, Rita turned away prepared to enjoy herself.

"Shall I do?" cried the Dryad, who was really charming. Her frock, girdled with moss, was strewn with knots and trails of leaves, while her hair rippled under its chaplet of bronze-green ivy. Here too was Peace, quite impressive, and chatting to a dainty fairy with flounces of white crinkled paper, and sparkling with tinsel and silver stars.

The Fancy Dress Ball

Even the mistresses were in character. Miss Hadland shimmered in a wonderful robe of soft blues and reds, with here and there a dash of orange, and it was whispered that she represented a flame.

It was glorious fun. They enjoyed every minute, and when at supper time they trooped into the dining-room, the table was a sight to gladden the heart of any schoolgirl. Rita was amused and pleased to notice that Una was as gay as anybody.

At the close of the evening the prizes were awarded.

"The first prize, you will all agree, goes to the Dryad, who is most picturesque," and Miss Hadland handed a fountain-pen to the delighted Kathleen, amid a storm of applause.

"The second, I think, has been well earned by the Roman soldier—a striking and becoming costume." Una, quite overcome, bowed over a silver serviette ring.

"Thirdly, comes the crinkled-paper fairy, whose costume is both effective and cheap. I hope you will like this blotter, Madge. It has been a most successful evening, and we thank Rita Dunstan for her happy suggestion."

Later, the Principal, meeting the head girl in a quiet corner, said gently—

"I have seen enough to know, Rita, how your sympathy and unselfishness have helped us all. I am proud of you, dear," and she patted Rita's hand affectionately.

When at last the tired boarders trooped off to bed, the Roman soldier made a dart after the Japanese kimono. Seizing the girl's hand, she said brokenly—

"Thank you—oh, thank you for making me go. I'll try to be nice to the others—I will really."

And Rita felt amply repaid.

For Girls Who Want to be Nurses

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, formerly Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, gives some Excellent Advice and Hints in an Interview

BY GEORGE A. WADE

"NURSING to-day," said Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, when I was having a talk with her recently for the purposes of this article, "is different from nearly every other woman's professions; because, though mechanical in some respects, it involves characteristics which need the personal, the individualistic touch, the sympathetic vein in a manner which not many rival duties call for to the same degree, if at all.

"The success of one who is trying to bring half-dead life, or indifferent health, or necessary strength, or jaded powers of mind and brain right again in a sufferer must often depend just as much, or more, on the personality, temperament, and care of the nurse as it does on the skill of the medical attendant himself. So girls who have to undertake this work as trained nurses must have qualities of cheerfulness, temperament, health, and observation, together with an experience of life itself, which are seldom found combined in many women.

"I should advise all girls at school, who wish or hope to become trained nurses later, to learn the theory of anatomy, hygiene, physiology, and cookery, rather than some of the subjects often taught, which afterwards seldom prove very useful to nurses. Every would-be successful nurse should know something at least—and much, in some cases—of the subjects I have just described; so the earlier she sets about learning the elements of them the better.

"I think girls intending to be nurses should go to school till about seventeen, at which time their parents must get a syllabus from the General Nursing Council, or similar body, and ascertain what special subjects the girl must study for three years in order to obtain her State certificate as a nurse. That certificate is now imperative if a nurse wishes to be eligible for national employment, salaries, benefits, pension, and promotions, as every true nurse must wish to be; so a

parent should make sure her girl is going to a hospital which teaches and trains for that certificate, else all will be practically thrown away—money, time, trouble, and work.

“The girl should enter a ‘special’ hospital—i.e. one devoted to special diseases—when eighteen; or a ‘general’ hospital—one admitting all sorts of cases—when nineteen or twenty. She thus becomes a probationer for at least three years; and I would say here that such a girl must be healthy and of sound constitution, for the physical and mental strain of a nurse’s work is always great, and not least whilst she, as a young woman, is getting used to the job.

“The qualities which are particularly useful for a girl to possess who enters the nursing profession are, besides those above enumerated, discipline, obedience, calmness, and sweetness of disposition. A smiling face goes a long way in the sick-room; whilst the very training and labour of nursing demands a patience, a hopefulness, and a confidence which are not often possessed by more than one person out of fifty.

“The wise parent will begin early to teach a child to be very amenable to discipline. The ‘great’ nurse will always be she who has learned in early days to act promptly, strictly obedient to higher orders, and with real disciplinary caution in all emergencies. And, though some few girls may own these qualities in a measure from their childhood’s days, yet most girls have to be taught them, trained to them, stimulated to improve in them, just as they have in ordinary school-studies.

“There are many excellent openings to-day for clever, trained nurses, in comparison with what used to be possible; and as time passes such openings and opportunities are bound to increase tremendously rather than grow less. Even as a probationer you will be paid; for the majority of hospitals, besides giving such a girl her lodging, board, uniform, a certain amount of education, and facilities for expert tuition by doctors and nurses, pay anything from £20 to £30 a year as salary in addition.

“But I would put forth here a word of warning. The actual outlay of parents towards making their girl a trained nurse in the future may have to be increased somewhat, seeing that all training and equipment now cost more in price than in 1914. Even the hospitals may before much longer require a girl or her parents to pay a small premium on her entering the profession, which will perhaps be returned to her as a probationer in the form of salary, or bonus. Anyhow, it does look to-day, so far as we can foresee, that training will and must become a little more expensive in future than it was in the past.

“Now, a girl, or her parents, may well ask me here the following

question, and rightly so. 'What can I earn, when I have gained my State certificate, so to speak, and am a fully-fledged trained nurse? What prospects are there, as compared with those in other professions open to girls?'

"In reply to this, ere setting down the actual material emoluments and rewards, I would venture to say a word which must have your attention. Nursing, like doctoring, or being a parson, is something whose payment, whose reward, lies beyond money-value and returns that can be set down in pounds, shillings, and pence. It has a definite payment in itself—which nobody but the born nurse, the true woman at heart who loves nursing, can properly appreciate. Just as a man *must* be an artist—even if his money reward from the work is small—because 'painting' is born in him; just as he who feels the call to the clerical life *must* be ordained, without much regard as to what salary he shall get for parish-work; so the true nurse *must* be a nurse, even if she were—as she has so often been in the past—badly paid for her labour and devotion.

"But as to the actual financial outcome of trained nursing to-day. When fully certificated, a nurse can go either into public or private work; there are now many Government services calling loudly for trained nurses. The Army, Navy, Poor Law, Health, and Air Departments in Whitehall; together with Corporations and District Councils galore; also the Queen's Nursing Association, and other bodies, are all asking for clever skilled workers of this kind, and are ready to pay them good wages. You need never be out of a decent job, if you are properly qualified and do your duty, that is certain.

"If you are engaged in private nursing you will not receive food and lodging when off duty; but on the other hand, your fees will be higher, and there are many fine chances for her who can do excellent work as a private nurse, to say nothing of the rewards which often come to the trained nurse who can organise and conduct a big and successful nursing-home of her own.

As a public servant, there are many good posts open to you in large institutions, where, besides your board, lodging, and uniform, there are salaries up to £400 as head matron or superintendent. Of course the highest posts, and the most responsible positions, can only be attained by the cleverest and most successful trained nurses, after a wide experience. But this is the usual way with everything worth having in life, when one has to deal with work and careers, is it not?

"After all, the most splendid result of a nurse's life and labours, whether her career as such lasts for a number of years only, or right away to old age, must come from the half-hidden, often unknown, but

intensely fine satisfaction of feeling that she has done her duty nobly and well, that she has achieved a success which money cannot buy, which cannot be appraised in terms of cash, which is beyond mere wealth, mere cleverness, and mere outward showing.

"A nurse has very frequently to minister to a mind or spirit which is troubled, which is diseased, which has almost lost hope, from one sad cause or other. The patient may not even be the least bit mentally wrong, sometimes not even much wrong bodily, either. Yet he may need a good and sympathetic nurse to lift him out of the slough into which he has fallen, and the success of the woman doing this, whilst ministering to his slight bodily ailments, must of necessity bring its own reward, a wondrous inward satisfaction known to no one but herself.

"The magnificent women whose names have to-day become household words throughout the world, owing to their nursing labours—women like Florence Nightingale, Sister Dora, Edith Cavell—show the aspiring girl to what glorious heights the nursing service can rise when duty and self-sacrifice require the offering. These names should ever prove an inspiration, an example, to all right-minded girls who are seeking a vocation, if they possess at all the qualities—in more or less degree—which I have here set down as necessary to win success in nursing.

"The great keynote of nursing to-day is skilled training ; the finest and most valuable advice I can give you is to go for tuition only into those hospitals which will train you for the special certificate above described, for which the examination will come at the end of your three years' probation there. Pass that, do your best, train your in-born and acquired qualities and skill by wide and careful experience, be ever ready to learn new methods—and your success as a nurse is sure."

A Parcel of Books

Gwen's Remarkable Holiday Adventure

BY EDNA LAKE

"HERE is one for you, Gwen, and one for Margaret, but nothing for me."

As she spoke, Gertrude Conway handed letters to her two chums, and made a grimace. "Rotten luck, to be left here for the hols., and then to have all one's friends forget one," she said, as the three sat down on one of the garden seats to read the letters. Margaret Haldane laughed.

"Who had a box of chocs. yesterday?" she asked, "and peppermint creams the day before, and lots of other odds and ends? I don't think you are in a very bad way, old girl."

Gwen Morris said nothing. She was reading what looked like a short note, written in the crabbed writing that her two friends knew to be her guardian's. But as a rule his letters were long and interesting, and altogether jolly. Gwen often read bits of them aloud to her chums. This letter she did not offer to read extracts from, and indeed, after staring at it for a needlessly long time, in view of its brevity, she returned it to its envelope, and began to talk about what they should do with themselves all day.

"We might as well go for a tramp," said Margaret Haldane. "Miss Germaine does not mind what we do."

"Germey is quite a pet in the holidays—very different from her school time self," laughed Gertrude. "What are your plans, Gwen?"

"Oh, we might go through the woods. I like that walk best, if you two care for that way," was the reply, as the three sauntered off towards the school building to get hats and coats. It was hard luck to have to spend the holidays at school, but, of course, it was nice that they were all friends. If they had not been the pals that they were things would have been lots worse, as Margaret often pointed out.

It was not till that evening that Margaret and Gertrude were alone together. "I say, don't you wonder what Gwen's letter was

about? She looked so awfully worried when she had read it," said Margaret.

"Yes, I noticed that she did. And it was short, too, and she did not say one word about it. Usually she reads bits of Mr. Grayson's letters to us," answered the other, as they oiled their bicycles in the shed at the back of the school buildings. "Has he been rowing her for something, do you expect?" she added, getting a duster out of a locker and preparing to polish her handle-bars.

Margaret looked thoughtful. "That is not it," she declared; "Gwen just adores her guardian, and he returns the sentiment—if you can call it that. And we know how jolly he is, too. Only, of course, he is a bit eccentric sometimes, like all brainy people. But something about that letter is bothering Gwen. She has been quite unlike herself all day."

"Yes, quite jumpy," agreed Gertrude, rubbing away with great zeal. "And every time you spoke to her she seemed to have to come back from a long way off to think what you said," she added.

"She has been absent-minded, certainly, but I can't think what Miss Glegg would say about your English, if you put that sentence into an essay," laughed her companion, and then they began to talk of other things.

Both the friends were reminded of their conversation the next morning, after breakfast, when the parcel post arrived. There was a rather bulky parcel addressed to Gwen in her guardian's handwriting, and Margaret, who was the one to take it from the maid, called to Gwen excitedly—

"Here, Gwen, come quickly! Such a ripping parcel for you—from your guardian, too. It must hold something awfully jolly. Make haste and get it open!"

To Margaret's surprise Gwen did not seem at all pleased or excited. She came slowly towards Margaret who was holding the parcel, saying as she came, "It's nothing much. Only a parcel of books. Guardie said that he would send me soon."

Gertrude, who had come in Gwen's wake, exclaimed in surprise, "A parcel of books? Stories, or lesson books, Gwen?"

"Oh, just dull books—for hunting things up in, I believe," said Gwen, getting very red indeed, to her friends' great astonishment. "I'll take them up to my room."

With that she walked off, leaving the girls staring at one another in amazement. They always shared parcels with special cronies, and surely Mr. Grayson would have enclosed something interesting, chocs., or something of that sort, with the parcel of books! Or perhaps

the books were nice ones—tales that they could all enjoy together—and not just dull dictionaries and things of that sort. Why had Gwen not unpacked them there, or at least invited the other two to her room to watch her do it there?

“Jolly queer! And did you notice how red she got?” said Gertrude, as they went out and started a game of singles on the tennis court.

“Yes, there is something funny about those books. Gwen is never so sort of reserved about things,” said Margaret, beginning to serve without anyone to receive her balls. “Hurry up and get ready, Gertrude,” she added. “No need to wear our hair thin wondering what is making Gwen so huffy all of a sudden.”

Huffy or not, Gwen was certainly unlike herself for the next two days. She went about with her friends, and played with them, and read, or pretended to read, out in the garden. But all the time she seemed to be thinking of something else, and she gave the most foolish answers to questions, and did the most absent-minded things imaginable. Neither Margaret nor Gertrude could understand her, and as for the parcel of books—it had never been mentioned again. Gertrude had asked, on the day of its arrival, what the books were, after all, but Gwen had pretended not to hear the question.

“And they are not on the shelves in her room, for I was in there this morning, and didn’t see the sign of one of them,” said Gertrude, as she and Margaret boarded the motor bus which passed the school, and by means of which girls were conveyed to the little country town of Shelford, to do any shopping that they might need to do. Margaret shook her head.

“I can’t make out what has come to her. She has seemed different ever since she got that letter,” she answered, as they seated themselves, and the bus rattled off once more. “And she would not come with us to-day, either, which is very unlike Gwen. She is always ready for a jaunt to Shelford.”

At that moment the subject of their discussion was sitting in the little summer-house at the Abbey School, poring over her guardian’s letter. So short it was that she knew it by heart, but all the same she kept re-reading it.

“You must take the parcel on Thursday night, after the moon rises, and bury it in the ground beside the blasted oak, on four pine hill,” she read. “I do not care to explain why in a letter, but understand that my directions must be carefully carried out. And do not mention what you are to do to anyone. I do not suppose you will have any difficulty in doing what I ask, and you can trust me sufficiently, my dear girl, to be sure that what I ask is really necessary.”

A Parcel of Books

Gwen read this, over and over again. The place mentioned was not far from the school—only about a quarter of an hour's walk. She could steal out, of course, and get in again before the place was locked up for the night. The moon rose early. It would be bright moonlight by half-past nine. Miss Germaine usually had the house locked up about eleven, when she went to bed. It ought to be easy. But why? What did Mr. Grayson want those five books buried for? There were two dictionaries—one a French one, and the other a Latin. There was an old "Who's who," and two books of sermons—dull as tombs, Gwen was sure. All were tied together with a piece of stout twine.

The girl went indoors and looked at them now, as they lay in her bottom drawer, carefully hidden under a pile of clothing.

"What a silly notion! I wonder if it's worth while to unfasten them. But no, I am not to do that," she remembered. On the top of the books she had found a few lines in her guardian's handwriting. They ran—

"These are the books. Do not untie them on any account, and put paper round before burying. Do not forget time or place."

"And I must do it this evening. I hope to goodness I can get away from Margaret and Gertrude," thought Gwen. "I know," she told herself, "toothache is a handy complaint. I'll have it—badly—and come to bed early."

This decision arrived at, Gwen took herself off for a walk, determining that she would visit the blasted oak, and make sure of the best way of getting there.

Meanwhile, the other two girls were having a gay time at Shelford, where Gertrude had arranged to meet a party of cousins—two boys and a girl, with whom they spent the afternoon and part of the evening.

"Are you going home on the bus? Because if you are you'll have to scoot like mad," said Raymond, the elder of the boys. "It is just on time for it to leave, and it's a good five minutes' walk."

"Goodness! If we miss it we'll have to tramp home, all the way," shouted Gertrude, and away she and Margaret darted, leaving their friends in a most unceremonious manner. Raymond, however, sprinted after them.

"I say, don't get fashed. I'll take you on my motor bike if you get left," he jerked out, as they raced along. But Margaret just at that moment saw the bus.

"There it is. Hi, stop, stop!" she called, and the guard fortunately saw her waving hand, and stopped the vehicle.

"Right oh. Hope you won't develop diseased hearts. So long!" Raymond left the two girls who were too much out of breath to do more than clamber on board and sink on to the nearest seats. But when they had recovered their breath Margaret proposed going outside.

"It is so stuffy in here," she said, and Gertrude assented. There was just one vacant seat on the top of the bus, and into this they slipped, glad indeed of the fresh air after the stifling interior of the vehicle.

It was dusk by this time, and Gertrude said that it must be almost nine o'clock. "It is a good thing we are allowed so much liberty. Fancy sauntering in at nine in term," she said, but Margaret signed to her to be quiet.

"Listen," she breathed in the other's ears.

Directly behind the two girls sat a couple of men who were talking in low tones. The girls caught the words "books . . . parcel . . . fond of guardian." Then, "It is to-night. She'll do it, you think?"

"Not a doubt about that. She'd do anything he told her."

"You are sure it was all right—the writing, I mean?"

"What do you take me for? Of course I know what I'm about."

"Oh, all right; you needn't cut up rough. But girls are always curious. Won't she be unpacking them?"

"Not likely, seeing the orders to the contrary. Be at the oak by ten, or a little after, and I'll meet you."

The girls strained their ears, but they could hear no more, because some people in front of them were chattering so loudly. Indeed, it had been difficult to hear as much as they had heard.

As soon as the bus stopped at the entrance to the Abbey School, the two girls sprang off and hurried up the drive.

"What do you think they were talking about, Margaret?"

"Well, I'm not sure, of course. We may be quite wrong, but . . ."

"You mean Gwen's parcel?"

"Of course. We'll see where she is. There is something strange about that parcel. I feel sure there is."

The two girls hurried indoors, where they found glasses of milk awaiting them. Kate, the maid, whom they questioned about Gwen, said that she had gone to bed long ago with bad toothache.

"She had some bread and milk, about seven, and she's been gone to bed this long time," said the maid, and Margaret shot a glance full of meaning at Gertrude.

"It may be toothache, or something else," she remarked in a low

tone as, the maid having gone away, they hastily drank their milk. "What shall we do?"

"Think it out, and then do the best we can," said Gertrude tersely, as she emptied her glass. "We won't go to her room yet, though."

When the two girls were partly undressed, however, they put on dressing-gowns and went to visit Gwen, to "ask how her toothache is," as Margaret put it.

The moon was high in the heavens, and lit up the landing off which their bedroom and that occupied by Gwen opened. Tapping gently on her door, they waited. There was no answer, though they knocked twice more. Then Margaret turned the handle, and went softly into the room.

"Is it bad, old thing?" she asked gently, but the moonlight showed them that the room was empty.

"And she has not been in her bed, either. Quick, Margaret, we must go after her! Those men meant mischief of some kind," said Gertrude earnestly, as she turned to leave the room. Margaret followed her.

"Shall we tell Germy?" she asked doubtfully as they regained their own room.

"We can't. She is out this evening at General Forrest's dinner party. Come on. Make haste! I wish Raymond and Leslie were here, though."

The girls were soon dressed. Thoughts of Gwen, alone in that lonely place, lent wings to their feet when once they had left the school behind. It had not been easy to slip out, because all the maids were about, but they had managed it without attracting attention.

"Now, what shall we do? Go for help, or go straight to Gwen?" It was Margaret who jerked out the question as they raced towards the hill, on whose wooded top their chum was no doubt even then to be found.

"Good thing we knew what he meant by 'the oak,' But I wonder if they are to meet her there," said Gertrude, not replying to Margaret's question, because she was thinking the matter out as she ran. Both girls were so absorbed in their thoughts that they ran almost into the arms of a burly police constable, when turning a sharp corner.

Gertrude stopped at once.

"Will you come with us? A friend of ours has had a parcel of books sent her, and we think she is there on Four Pine Hill, by the blasted oak, and some men are going to meet her there, and we think that there is something shady about it all." Gertrude's explanation

left a great deal to the imagination, but happily the policeman was young and very alert. He said at once—

"All right, miss, I'll come along with you. Now, tell me all you can as we go."

The girls complied with this request, and were a little astonished to discover in doing so, how little they really knew about the matter. It was only because their suspicions had been aroused by Gwen's behaviour that they had taken so much notice of the chance words they had overheard on the bus. The policeman told them this, when their story was ended.

"But I'll take a look round, and you may as well go back," he was just saying, when they heard steps coming towards them. They were ascending the hill, by a narrow path, that led through undergrowth to the clearing at the summit, on which stood the four pines and the blasted oak. It was a lonely spot, and the moonlight made it seem very eerie at that moment.

"Hush! Here comes someone," whispered Gertrude.

"Why, it is Gwen!" The words broke from Margaret, as the figure of a girl came dashing at a great speed down the slope towards them. Seeing the little group she uttered a cry, then stumbled and, falling headlong, rolled to their feet.

"Frightened by something. Yes, she's fainted, but she'll come round in a minute."

The policeman was a man of resource, for he had a flask of brandy which he produced at once, and set to work to revive Gwen. And in a very short time the girl was sufficiently recovered to sit up, and look round. Her relief at seeing Gertrude and Margaret was great, and she began at once to give an account of her adventures.

"You get along back to the school now," said the policeman. "Then you can tell your headmistress all about it. I'll take you down to the road and whistle for a pal of mine who ought to be somewhere round here. I think we are on the track of a couple we've been wanting these few months past."

So Gwen did not get a chance to tell her story till they were safely in Miss Germaine's sitting-room at the Abbey, drinking hot cocoa and being gently scolded by the head.

"I was sure that Guardie—I mean Mr. Grayson—would not ask me to do anything weird like burying books, and yet it was his writing, absolutely, and his note-paper, and the postmark was Cleveleys, and he is there now," explained Gwen. "Then, when I got to the place, I put down the parcel, and began to dig a hole with a trowel that I had brought from the gardener's shed, when all at

A Parcel of Books

once I heard men's voices. I had been frightened enough before, but that was the last straw, and I just rushed away, and left the books and everything."

"Another time when you get a mysterious letter such as the one you received a few days ago, bring it to me," advised Miss Germaine. "I may be able to help you. One thing is clear, and that is that your guardian did not send the letter or the books. And now to bed, all three of you."

The next morning the mystery was cleared up. The police managed to catch the two men—the same whom the girls had overheard on the bus—and they proved to be two expert thieves for whom the authorities had for some time been searching. One was an ex-valet of Mr. Grayson's, who had hit upon the plan of sending stolen property through the post, to Gwen, to put the police off the scent. The jewels, worth many thousands of pounds, had been cunningly hidden in the middle of the five books, which were first fixed together at their edges, a hole being afterwards hollowed out of the centre of the five. This hole was, of course, hidden by the cover of the top book. Clear enough was it why the last message had warned Gwen not to untie the books! Her guardian's writing having been cleverly imitated, his note-paper used, and even the postmark on the parcel being correct, was quite sufficient to put an unsuspecting girl off the scent. The man knew enough of Gwen's devotion to Mr. Grayson to be sure also that the girl would do anything that she was told to do, no matter how strange or difficult it might be. So the scheme would have been entirely successful, if Margaret and Gertrude had not happened to visit Shelford, come home on the last bus, and overhear those scraps of conversation.

"Never mind, it has ended all right," said Margaret, as they sat talking the adventure over the next day.

Gwen shivered. "I never want anyone to send me a parcel of books again, though," she said. "Just think! I hid them in a drawer in my bedroom for quite a long time, and never dreamed what they contained! I might have been had up for receiving stolen property, I suppose."

"Never mind. It will be a jolly good yarn for the others when next term begins," said Gertrude consolingly.

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A School Story

BY CHRISTINE CHAUNDLER

I

"I AM very disappointed, Shirley," said Miss Lawson.

Shirley Vaughan, Second Prefect of Lockhurst Abbey School, flushed and moved uncomfortably in the chair Miss Lawson had invited her to take, as the headmistress regarded her gravely through her gold-rimmed eyeglasses. Miss Lawson had a way of making you feel uncomfortable if your conduct did not come up to her expectations; and although before she had sought this interview with the Head, Shirley had been quite sure that she was doing the only thing possible in the circumstances, now that the difficult explanations had been made doubt was beginning to assail her.

"I am very disappointed, Shirley," repeated the Head. "When I chose you for my Second Prefect, I did not anticipate laying upon you any further burden for some time to come. With Madge as head girl, I thought you would have been broken into your duties gradually. I did not foresee, I could not have foreseen, that Madge's unexpected illness would cause the responsibility of her position to descend upon your shoulders. When I made you temporary head in Madge's place, I did not, of course, expect that it would be quite plain sailing for you, and I was prepared to make considerable allowance for your inexperience in handling the girls. But that you should ask to be relieved of the headship after such a very short trial is a great disappointment to me. I had hoped better things of you, Shirley, I must confess."

Shirley coloured still more hotly.

"I—I'm very sorry, Miss Lawson," she faltered. "I don't want to disappoint you—but—but I really think it would be better for the girls if someone else were head—someone who is good at games. Madge was so perfectly splendid at everything, you see. I'm afraid

it really is rather rotten for the girls—rough luck for them, I mean—to have me in her place.”

The headmistress unbent a little.

“I can quite understand that the position is difficult,” she conceded. “But, Shirley, dear, don’t you see that it is just because it *is* difficult that I am so disappointed you should want to give up the struggle so soon. How long have you been taking Madge’s place—a fortnight?”

“A little more than that, now, Miss Lawson. Nearly three weeks,” said Shirley.

“Well, even supposing that it is nearly three weeks, that isn’t such a very long time to get into the way of things. I like to feel that my girls are capable of overcoming the difficulties that may lie in their way; and I try to choose for my prefects those whom I think are strong enough to rise to emergencies. Perhaps I was mistaken in my estimate of your character, and of course if you really feel that the task is beyond you, I must try and see if I cannot find someone else to take Madge’s place. But I am not going to let you decide this thing in a hurry. Think it over carefully, and come and talk to me about it again to-morrow. Then, if you honestly feel that you cannot undertake the duties that have fallen to your share since Madge’s illness, I will accept your resignation. Will you promise me to reconsider the matter very carefully, Shirley?”

“Yes, Miss Lawson,” said Shirley in a small voice, as she rose to her feet, feeling that the interview was over. The headmistress rose, too, and laid her hand on the girl’s shoulder.

“You must not think I am unsympathetic and do not understand the difficulties, dear,” she said gently. “Perhaps I understand them better than you think. But I do like my girls to show courage in difficult circumstances; and I shall be very disappointed if the girl whom I chose for Second Prefect because of the sterling qualities I imagined her to possess, shirks her responsibilities now that they are proving to be a little more unpleasant than she had expected.”

“Thank you, Miss Lawson,” murmured Shirley perfunctorily as she left the mistress’s room. But there was anything but gratitude in her heart, as she made her way back to the little study which she had occupied since Madge Payne’s unexpected illness and return home a fortnight after the beginning of the summer term.

“A little more unpleasant, indeed!” she said to herself despondently, as she sat down at the writing-desk and buried her face in her hands. “If things were only a *little* unpleasant, I shouldn’t mind! But when nearly every girl in the school is against me, when half of

them obey me unwillingly and the other half won't obey me at all—well, I really think it is a bit thick to expect me to carry on!”

A rat-tat at the door interrupted her meditations, and a merry-faced person put her head inside the study. It was Diana Graham, a member of the Sixth, one of Shirley's fellow-prefects, and, incidentally, her greatest friend.

“Hullo, old thing! Are you busy? What are you up to? I say, you do look down in the dumps! What's the matter? May I come in?” And without waiting for an answer to any of her questions the newcomer came into the room and shut the door behind her.

Shirley brightened up a little at her friend's entrance. Few people could resist Di Graham's cheerful personality, and Shirley Vaughan was certainly not one of the few.

“Yes, come along in. I do feel rather down in the dumps. Come and talk to me and cheer me up,” she responded, as she pulled up an armchair for her visitor. “Goodness knows I want cheering up! Everything's just too rotten for words at the present moment.”

“You look pretty blue,” said Di, as she sank down into the armchair. “What's up? Headship troubles again?”

Shirley nodded.

“Yes,” she said. “I've just been to Miss Lawson and offered my resignation.”

Di sat upright with an expression of dismay on her merry face.

“Shirley! You haven't!” she exclaimed.

“Yes, I have,” said Shirley doggedly. “You don't wonder at it either, do you? You saw the way those kids behaved at tea to-day. I haven't a scrap of influence over them. And they know it and I know it—and everybody else in the school knows it, too, I should think! What is the good of my going on being head if I can't manage them better than that?”

“It was Irma Frensham's fault,” said Di. “She was in charge of the table, and she was egging them on to kick up a row. When Dorrie Raynes chucked that bit of bread and butter at Enid Thompson and Enid chucked it back, she laughed at them. I saw her. What can you expect from a party of Third Form kids if a prefect encourages them to behave like that?”

“It may have been partly Irma's fault—but that doesn't alter the fact that I can't manage to keep order, even amongst the Third Form kids,” said Shirley bitterly. “Besides, that isn't the only thing. Ever since Madge had to be sent home and Miss Lawson announced that I was to be head girl in her place, the school has gone out of its way to

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show me how unpopular I am. I just can't stick it any longer—and I went to the Head this evening and told her so."

"What did she say?" asked Di after a pause.

"Oh, she talked the usual thing. Said how disappointed she was and how she had hoped better things of me. Afraid she had made a mistake in her estimate of my character, etc., etc. She jawed at me for half an hour and then sent me away to think it over."

"She hasn't actually accepted your resignation then?" said Di, a note of relief in her voice.

"No. I'm to go to her to-morrow and talk about it again. But it's no good, Di—I shall have to resign. I just can't stick it any longer and that's a fact! I never flattered myself I was frightfully popular. But until I took on this head girl business, I had no idea how very *unpopular* I was!"

"I don't know that you are really unpopular," said Di thoughtfully. "It's mostly Irma Frensham, I'm sure. She was vice-captain for the games and only just junior to you as a prefect. I think she thought that because of the games she'd have been put in as temporary head instead of you, and she's so beastly jealous about it that she's doing her level best to make things uncomfortable for you. When a prefect starts to do that it isn't altogether surprising if some of the kids cotton on."

"But it isn't only the kids," said Shirley gloomily. "It's the Middle School, just as much, and even the Senior School isn't too keen. They would all rather have had Irma as head instead of me. Oh, well, they can have her now if Miss Lawson chooses! I shan't stand in her way any longer."

"I hope to goodness you *will* then! I should simply hate to have Irma Frensham over me. And it will be a jolly bad thing for the school at large if she *is* made head," remarked Di.

"Why? She's pretty and popular and she's **A1** at games. What more do you want in a head girl?" asked Shirley a little bitterly.

"A good deal more," returned Di sturdily, ignoring the bitter note in her friend's voice. "Backbone for one thing. Irma Frensham may be good at games, but she hasn't any grit. She plays brilliantly when things are going right—but she gives in at once if they begin to go wrong. Oh, I know! I'm a member of the cricket eleven and of the swimming and tennis teams, and, in spite of all her brilliancy at times, I know just how far Irma Frensham can be relied upon! And as for her popularity! Well—if it's popularity you're after, you're better without her sort! Heaps of the kids are cracked about her, I know, but they're cracked in a very unhealthy way. I don't believe

Miss Lawson will make Irma head, even if you resign. Lawrie hates all the flowers and sweets and kissing-in-bed-at-nights business—and Irma encourages it. You know yourself that she does, Shirley. And that's the reason she appears to be so popular on the face of things."

"I know she rather likes having satellites," said Shirley. "That's one of the things I've had trouble about. When Madge had gone Irma took to coming into my dorm to tuck up some of the kids after lights were out. It was against rules, and bad for the kids, for they used to lie awake until the Seniors came upstairs, more than an hour after their own bed-time. I had to ask her not to do it, and she's hated me ever since, while the kids are as sulky as they can be with me about it!"

"Poor old girl," said Di commiseratingly. "You are having rather a bad time! But *don't* give it up, Shirley. Stick to it and show your pluck! Things will get better by and bye."

"But that's just it—I don't think they will get better," said Shirley in a miserable voice. "They are simply going from bad to worse at present. Lockhurst Abbey seems to have no use for a head girl who's not good at sports. If I were only good at *one* game, it wouldn't be so bad—but just look at me! I'm hopeless at tennis, swim like a lump of lead, can't bat for nuts, and as for lacrosse and netball and hockey—the less said about my performances at them the better! And yet I'm supposed to be head girl and, by virtue of that, captain of games! The position's too absurd for words!"

"Well, but games aren't everything," argued Di. "You've got all the other qualities needed. You must have, or Miss Lawson would never have made you Second Prefect."

"There's a great difference between being Second Prefect and being Head of the School, though," said Shirley with a sigh. "I got on fairly well as Second in Command. With dear old Madge for head, it was easy enough. But it's quite a different thing to being Head Girl, and if Miss Lawson had known that Madge was going to crock up like this, I don't believe she'd ever have put me where she did."

"All the same, you'll make a better head than Irma Frensham will ever make," said Di earnestly. "Do think it over, old thing, and 'reconsider your decision'—as Lawrie would say. For the sake of the Abbey I really think you ought to try and stick it."

Shirley rose to her feet and walked across to the window of the little study, and gazed out over the wide playing-fields belonging to the school. It was growing late, but daylight still lingered and some of the girls were still practising at the cricket nets—Lockhurst Abbey was very keen on cricket. The shouts and laughter of the players were

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borne across the field to the study window, and Shirley heaved another sigh as she listened to them.

"If only I were good at *one* game, I would try and stick it," she repeated. "But I'm such a hopeless duffer at everything!"

"You're not really as bad as you think," said Di encouragingly as she came over to her side. "You're a very temperamental person you know, and rather a nervous player. I don't suppose you can help it. You're absolutely a genius over the violin, and musical people are nearly always very highly-strung. But you've got heaps of grit, even if you have got nerves—and if you'd only set yourself to do it, I believe you could improve your tennis and cricket no end. You sent up one or two quite decent balls when I made you bowl to me at the nets a few days ago."

"I used to be able to bowl a bit once," said Shirley, half absent-mindedly. "My brothers are fearfully keen on cricket, and when I was a little thing, before I came to school, they said I was quite a decent bowler. They used to make me bowl to them for hours in the holidays, and they taught me heaps of things about length and pace."

"But if you were good at bowling, why on earth did you ever drop it when you came to Lockhurst?" cried Di.

"Well, you see, the cricket standard here was so high. I couldn't bat for little apples, and a new kid doesn't get much chance at bowling. Besides, I was frightfully shy, and I should only have made a mess of it if I had been put on," said Shirley. "I was shoved into the lowest team of all, and I soon lost interest in the game. I was only a little kid, you see, and a miserably shy and self-conscious one at that," she added apologetically.

Di paid little heed to her explanation. Her brain was working rapidly, and as Shirley finished speaking, the younger girl caught her companion excitedly by the arm.

"Shirley! I've got an idea! If you were good at bowling once, you're pretty sure to be good at it still, although you may be a bit out of form. Bowlers are born, not made—though they may be improved by practice. Now, if there is one thing the school needs, it is a first-class bowler. If we go down against Rookfield College next month it will be solely on account of our bowling. Why shouldn't *you* set to work and qualify as a bowler? If you practised steadily, I really believe something might be made of you. And just supposing you turned out really good—it would solve half the difficulties of your being head at once!"

Shirley gave a scornful laugh.

"*Me* turn out really good at anything! That's a likely sort of thing to happen, isn't it! I've forgotten all I ever knew about bowl-

ing—it was just luck I got your wicket the other day. You're letting your imagination run away with you, Di."

"No, I'm not," maintained Di stoutly. "That was a jolly good ball you got me with, and if you did it once there's no reason why you shouldn't do it again. I can't think why I never thought of it before—but the more I think of it now, the more certain I am I could turn you into a bowler. See here," she added excitedly. "There's still three-quarters of an hour before Chapel, and though the light isn't as good as it was, there's enough to see by. Come along out now and let's have a knock-up. There's hardly anybody left at the nets. You shall bowl to me, and I'll do my level best to hit you about, and we'll see if something couldn't be made of you. Come on, it will do me good. I haven't touched a bat all day."

"I don't mind coming and sending you down a few balls," said Shirley. "But I warn you, it's no earthly good. I shall never be a bowler or anything else—I'm fated to be a failure at games."

"Fated fiddlesticks," said Di gaily. "You come along and let me knock some of that nonsense out of you."

Shirley obediently followed her friend out to the playing-field and over to the nets. Di arrayed herself in gloves and pad and selected a bat, and having hunted up two or three balls she conducted her companion to one of the farthest nets. There were very few girls about at this late hour, and the few there were to be seen were far too engrossed in their own occupations to take much notice of the two prefects. Shirley felt that at least she was safe from adverse criticism as she took the ball in hand.

Her first two balls were wides, the third a daisy-cutter, the fourth flew high over Di's head. But the fifth was better. The sixth attained quite a respectable length, and the seventh and eighth met with an approving word from Di as she sent them neatly back. But the ninth ball actually found the wicket, and Di was loud in her applause as she threw it down to Shirley and replaced her bails.

"That's it! That's the very same ball that got me the other day. See if you can do it again, Shirley."

Shirley, stimulated by Di's encouragement, tried her best, and after a few more efforts really did succeed in doing it again. This time Di grew enthusiastic.

"You really *are* a bowler, Shirley! Of course you'd be no use to a team at present. You send so many duds that you'd give away more runs than you'd save by your wickets. But if you will only work at it—practise every day for a month regularly—I really do believe something might be made of you. That break to leg you get in occasionally is A1. It beats me every time—it will take me ages to learn to play it

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properly. If you could only get a break the other way as well, and could acquire a good, steady length ball for general purposes, you'd be a jolly useful bowler. Do have a shot at it, old girl? Withdraw your resignation and stick to the headship, and let's work up your bowling unknown to the rest of the school? Then, when you're a wee bit more certain, we'll spring you on the girls as a surprise and see what they have to say about it. It would make no end of difference to your position as head if we could only get you into the eleven."

It would make all the difference—Shirley knew that well enough. Lockhurst Abbey was tremendously keen on games—cricket especially it excelled in. If she could only earn a place in the First Eleven as a bowler, half her troubles as head girl would disappear. But could she ever do such a thing? Shirley was far too diffident where her prowess at games was concerned, to be able to hope that she ever could.

"It's no good, Di," she said. "It's awfully decent of you to try to cheer me up by telling me I can bowl. But with all due respect to you, I'm perfectly certain I shall never be any use. And as for being in the Eleven—why, it's absurd to think of it! Here have I been all these years at the Abbey—if I really had the makings of a bowler in me somebody would have found it out by now!"

"Not necessarily. You say yourself you were never put on to bowl when you were a Junior, and since you've been in the Senior School and games have been more or less optional, you've never gone in for them much—now, have you? You've spent every moment of your spare time scraping away on your old fiddle. Which may be all right for the Second Prefect, but won't do for Lockhurst Abbey's head girl! Now see here, Shirley, old thing. What I want you to do is to come down to the nets with me every day for the next month and bowl to me steadily for an hour. We'll keep it dark from the others, and if at the end of that month you don't give the Abbey the surprise of its life, I'll—I'll eat my cricket shoes!"

"Don't make rash vows," said Shirley. "Cricket shoes would be horribly indigestible, I should think! Besides, how can we keep it dark from the girls? They're bound to notice that we're always at the nets."

"No, they're not. We'll do it during prep. Nobody uses the nets then. We're prefects, so we can do our prep. any old time. It will be easy enough to get permission to practise when none of the others are about. I'll speak to Miss Terry right away and get it fixed up. If we take first hour of prep., from five to six, we're practically certain to have the nets to ourselves."

"First hour? Oh, Di, no, I can't! That's my time for the violin

with Miss Norman. It's the only time she can manage to give me this term. I just couldn't give that up."

"Couldn't it be changed?" asked Di.

Shirley shook her head.

"No, it couldn't. It was awfully difficult to arrange it as it was. It's Miss Norman's only possible time. It's frightfully decent of her to give it to me at all. It's nothing to do with my regular lessons, you see. It's just an extra—because Miss Norman's as keen on music as I am myself."

"Well, it's the only time we can get the nets to ourselves," observed Di. "It's rough about the violin, of course. I know how desperately keen you are on it. But still, Shirley, old thing, you don't really *need* that violin practice, you know. You're as good at the fiddle already as any ordinary girl has any right to be! It isn't as if you were taking up music as a career when you left school. You know it's only a hobby—and you'd still have your regular lessons twice a week."

"I know. But, oh, Di, don't ask me to give up my music hour! My violin's my only consolation just now," pleaded Shirley.

"I'm not asking you to give it up altogether, old girl," said Di gently. "Only asking you not to devote quite so much time to it. I don't think your violin playing would suffer much if you neglected it for a week or two, while I'm jolly certain that regular practice at the nets would work wonders with your bowling—and incidentally improve the Abbey's chance of pulling off the match against Rookfield by about fifty per cent!"

"There's the prayer-bell," said Shirley at this juncture. "Buck up and put the things away. We shall have to be quick, or we shall be late."

And in the scramble to put away the cricket things and the rush across the playing-field back to the school, the two girls were obliged to abandon their discussion.

II

But Di's idea, coming as it did upon the top of Miss Lawson's remarks, made a deep impression upon Shirley. All through prayers that evening she pondered the subject, and long after the rest of the Sixth had gone up to bed, she sat alone in her little study, thinking the matter over. She longed to be relieved of the burden of responsibility that had descended upon her so suddenly, but at the same time she did not want to feel that in resigning her position, she was running

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away from her task. Both Miss Lawson and Di had seemed to think that she would be shirking if she gave up the headship now. Was it really her duty to stick to her post, no matter how difficult and unpleasant it might be?

She rose with a sigh at last and, going to her violin case, she opened it and took out her violin.

"If I do go on with it, it means giving you up for a while, my darling," she murmured as she looked at her beloved instrument. "I believe Di is right about the bowling—I believe I *could* get good at it, if I gave up my time to practising at the nets. If I'm going to stick to the headship, I've jolly well got to get good at something and win the respect of the girls. Things can't go on as they're doing any longer. Either I've got to be a better head, or else chuck up the job altogether!"

Then, with a caressing movement, she laid her cheek against the violin.

"It will be rotten—giving up my hour with you, old thing," she whispered. "But—but I guess I've got to do it."

By the time she went to bed that night, Shirley's mind was made up. She would go to the headmistress in the morning and tell her that she would make another attempt to manage the girls. She would explain to Miss Norman that, for the present at any rate, the musical hour must be given up. And she would follow Di's suggestion and put in all her spare time at the nets to try, with her friend's help, to make her bowling good.

Miss Lawson smiled very kindly when she heard Shirley's decision. Miss Norman, though disappointed, was acquiescent, and Diana was frankly delighted at her friend's change of mind. The younger girl lost no time in making arrangements with the games mistress for the private practices, and she carried Shirley off to begin her training that very same day.

Di had been quite right in her estimate of the quality of Shirley's bowling. Shirley really was a born bowler. The coaching of the schoolboy brothers had been sound, and its results showed themselves even now. In a few days Shirley had abandoned wides and daisy-cutters, except for such occasional lapses as might fall to anybody's share. In a week her balls had attained a steadiness of length and pace that made them difficult for any average batsman to play. By the end of a fortnight the break to leg had been developed considerably, and a useful break to the off had also been acquired. And by the time three weeks' steady practice had been put in, Di was so enthusiastic over her pupil's progress, that she went to Miss Terry, the

games mistress, and begged her to put in an appearance at the nets during the practice hour to watch Shirley's bowling.

"Shirley's bowling?" said the mistress in some amusement. "Have you been trying to teach Shirley to bowl? I can't imagine Shirley being any good at anything to do with games."

"You just wait until you've seen her, Miss Terry. I believe she's shaping to be the best bowler in the school. Do come down to-night and watch her. We're going to be at the nets from five to six."

"Very well, I'll come," said the games mistress good naturedly. But it must be confessed that she had very little hope of discovering any outstanding genius in Shirley Vaughan.

"Diana's a dear, and one of the best all-round cricketers we've got," she told herself. "But she's rather given to enthusiasms, and I suspect this is just some wild scheme for helping poor Shirley in her uphill struggle as head." For the staff knew a good deal more than the girls ever suspected of the various things that went on in the school.

But Miss Terry changed her mind about the wildness of Di's scheme when she strolled down to the nets and watched Shirley's performance there that evening. Shirley was a little nervous at the games mistress's presence at first. But she had not been practising all these weeks for nothing, and after a few wides and no-balls, she pulled herself together and got back into her usual form. She sent the balls down the pitch with a speed and accuracy that astonished even Di, and finally disposed of her friend's wicket with a well-pitched ball that drew an exclamation of surprise and pleasure from Miss Terry.

"Well bowled, Shirley! I had no idea you could bowl like that. Here, Diana, give me your bat and let me see what I can make of her balls." And Shirley had the supreme satisfaction of taking the mistress's wicket three times before Miss Terry could master that intricate break to leg.

"What on earth have we been doing to let such talent run to waste all this while!" cried the games mistress delightedly, as her bails flew off for the third time. "Shirley, there isn't the remotest doubt about it—you'll have to play against Rookfield College next week! Diana, my dear child, you deserve a testimonial for discovering such a genius. Talk about hiding a light under a bushel—I can't think how Shirley has managed to conceal her ability all this time. Do you really mean to say that nobody else in the school knows how well she can bowl?"

"Not a soul, Miss Terry," declared Di with a grin. "We came down to the nets at this time on purpose to keep it dark. Don't give

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us away, will you? Just put Shirley down to play against Rookfield, and let's spring her as a surprise upon the school."

"Very well," agreed the mistress smilingly. "She'll have to practise once or twice with the eleven, of course. But we won't put her on to bowl too much. We'll give her the last few overs of every practice to get used to the field. And if she can refrain from making too much use of that leg-break until the match, I daresay we'll be able to make Lockhurst rub its eyes when the great day comes."

"Oh, I do hope we shall! It will be just the rippingest sell for some of them!" cried Di gleefully, spinning round on her toes. And Miss Terry smiled at her understandingly. She knew something of Shirley's trials and troubles during this summer term.

The games committee, consisting of Miss Terry, Shirley, Irma Frensham, Di Graham, and Gwen Clynes, another member of the Sixth, met next evening after prayers to discuss the coming match with Rookfield College. The match with Rookfield was the great event of the summer term. It was an all-day match, played on each school's ground in alternate years. This year it was to be played at the Abbey. Excitement in the school ran high, for last summer the College had beaten Lockhurst by fifteen runs, and the Abbey girls were wild with longing to wipe out the defeat and turn the tables upon their rivals. There was a good deal of doubt as to whether they would not be defeated again, for the absence of Madge Payne, a good slow bowler as well as a steady bat and an excellent fieldsman, was likely to militate seriously to the home eleven's disadvantage.

"Of course, what we want is a really first-class bowler," remarked Irma, as the committee took its places round the table to discuss the team. "Dorothy Holmes plays a good ball, but she's not much use on a fast wicket. And Clare Denman is so erratic. We shall miss Madge most frightfully this year, Miss Terry."

"We shall," agreed the games mistress, who was acting as Chairman of the meeting. "Nevertheless, we must make up our minds to win without her. Now let's discuss the eleven. Shirley and I have already made out a list of prospective players. Will you read the names aloud, Shirley? Then we can see if anybody thinks any alterations should be made."

Shirley produced her list of names and began to read them aloud rather nervously. It was something of an ordeal for her, in the circumstances, but as it was customary for the games captain to act as secretary at the meetings, and as Shirley, in her capacity as head girl, was forced into the position of games captain so far as official matters were concerned—she had never yet played in a match, and

Irma usually captained the teams when actual play was in progress—the games mistress thought it better to let matters take their usual course.

"Irma Frensham, Diana Graham, Gwen Clynes, Dorothy Holmes, Clare Denman, Phyllis Reid, Carol Deane, Nita Carnforth, Evelyn MacGregor, Sallie Coutts—and Shirley Vaughan," read Shirley.

There was an audible gasp from the two members of the committee not in the secret as the last name was pronounced. Then there came an ominous silence as Shirley folded up her paper. Di glared defiance at Irma Frensham, and after a moment Miss Terry, with an amused glance at the faces round the table, sat upright in her chair and spoke.

"Well," she said briskly, "that's our selection. Anybody any comments to make?"

"None from *me*, Miss Terry," said Di.

"Don't you think, Miss Terry, we ought to have a stronger bowler?" said Irma Frensham.

"Can you suggest one, Irma?" asked the mistress.

"There's Rachel Warner from the Upper Fifth," said Irma. "She's quite a useful bowler, and she doesn't bat badly, either. I had thought of suggesting her as a member of the eleven."

"She can't bowl for toffee," said Di scornfully. "Wickham High made sixty-nine runs off her bowling in the Second Eleven match last week."

"She was out of form that day," said Irma. "She took my wicket twice last night at the nets."

"Whom would you suggest leaving out if we were to play her, Irma?" asked Miss Terry. "Clare Denman?"

"Oh, no! Not Clare, Miss Terry," said Irma. "She's played in the eleven all this term—I don't think it would be at all advisable to drop Clare."

"Then, whom would you drop?" asked the mistress.

Irma hesitated.

"I—it's rather difficult to say, Miss Terry," she blurted out at last. "But don't you think—in such an important match as this—don't you think it would be better only to have people who have played in matches before?"

"Why on earth don't you say outright 'Drop Shirley,' and have done with it?" said Di bluntly.

"Hush, Di," reproved Miss Terry. "That's rather an aggressive way of putting it. Do you mean you think it inadvisable to play Shirley Vaughan, Irma?"

"Well, yes, Miss Terry—if you want to know, I do," said Irma.

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"I don't want to play if the committee thinks I ought not," said Shirley, growing very hot and uncomfortable.

"The committee doesn't think you ought not!" said Di. "I'm one of the committee—and I say you *ought*!"

"I think, Irma, that we ought to explain to you that Shirley has been showing extraordinarily good form as a bowler lately," said Miss Terry. "I was watching her at the nets last night, and I came to the conclusion that without any doubt she ought to be included in the team."

Irma said nothing, but her expression showed that she was quite unconvinced by any conclusion Miss Terry might have come to. The mistress turned to the other member of the committee.

"What do you say, Gwen?" she inquired.

"I don't quite know what to say, Miss Terry," said Gwen candidly. "I've never seen Shirley play cricket, and I didn't know she was any good at bowling. But of course, if you say so——"

"I do say so, emphatically," remarked the mistress, as Gwen hesitated. "But I don't want to force my decision upon the committee. If you like we will have a practice at the nets to-morrow to decide the question. Shirley and Rachel Warner shall both be put on to bowl, and the rest of us will stand round and give judgment."

"I think perhaps that would be the fairest way of deciding——" began Irma. But, much to her chagrin, Gwen Clynes interrupted her.

"Oh, no, Miss Terry! I don't think that's really necessary. If you say Shirley's bowling is good enough, that's enough for me," she said.

"So it is for me," said Di.

"What do you say, Irma?" asked the mistress.

"Oh, of course, if you and the rest of the committee are satisfied, I am, too," said Irma unwillingly.

Miss Terry concealed a smile.

"Very well, that settles the team selection," she remarked. "We won't ask your opinion, Shirley, since you're the interested person. Now let's get on with the other business."

The other business was duly "got on" with, and in due course the committee dispersed, leaving Shirley Vaughan, in her capacity as captain, to pin up the list of players upon the notice-board.

That list caused something like a sensation in the school. Although, since Madge Payne's departure, Shirley had taken over her nominal duties as games captain, she had so far only concerned herself with the secretarial matters of the various teams. Irma Frensham, or some other player, had been deputed to act as captain during the match

itself. No one had ever dreamed that Shirley Vaughan would have put herself in to play in a First Eleven match—much less that she would have done so in the most important match of the year. Great indignation was aroused in the school, indignation which Irma Frensham took care to fan zealously, and the head girl's position was in no way improved—rather the reverse in fact—by her inclusion in the team.

However, Shirley was growing inured to hostility by now. She performed her duties with a dogged perseverance, taking no outward notice of the rebellious murmurs that reached her ears, and trying her best to ignore the many petty annoyances by which the Abbey, spurred on by Irma Frensham, sought to make her aware of her unpopularity in the school.

"But I've quite made up my mind about one thing," the temporary head said to Di, as the two girls walked down to the nets on the eve of the match for a last practice. "If I make a fool of myself to-morrow, nothing shall stop me from going to the Head and handing in my resignation. I simply can't stand any more of this!"

"You *won't* make a fool of yourself to-morrow," returned Di with conviction. "You'll find yourself a heroine before the day is over—you just mark my words! You must put yourself on to bowl in good time, and give yourself an over or two to steady your nerves, and then everything will be all right."

"I shan't have any say as to when I'm put on to bowl," said Shirley. "Irma Frensham's going to captain the team on the field."

"*What!*" Di stopped still in dismay. "Shirley, you *haven't* been donkey enough to ask Irma to captain the team?"

"Yes, I have. I had to. She's acted as captain on the field ever since Madge left. I couldn't very well do anything else but ask her," said Shirley.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" groaned Di tragically. "Now you've just about done it. Irma won't put you on to bowl at all, and all our beautiful scheme will fall to the ground."

"She'll have to put me on some time, considering that the only reason I'm in the eleven at all is to bowl," said Shirley.

"She won't! I know our beloved Irma through and through. She's far too jealous of you to give you the remotest chance of distinguishing yourself. If she puts you on at all, it will be quite at the end of Rookfield's innings, when, if you *do* take any wickets, it will be put down to the inferior batting of the tail, and not to any skill on your part. Oh, Shirley! What on earth did you want to go and do such a thing for! Why in goodness' name didn't you captain the eleven yourself?"

"I don't know enough about the game to do that," said Shirley. "I may be able to bowl a bit, but that's all. Irma knows a thousand times better than I do how the field should be placed. I had to make her captain for the good of the school. After all, Di, a match isn't won solely by bowling."

"It can easily be lost by it, though," responded Di gloomily. "I only hope to goodness Irma will play the game and give you a show. If she doesn't, the match is as good as lost—as well as your popularity. For neither Clare nor Dorothy is strong enough for Rookfield College batting."

"Irma will play the game right enough when it comes to the point," said Shirley reassuringly. "She may be a little jealous of me; but she isn't mean enough to try and pay off old scores at the expense of the school."

But in spite of her confident words, Shirley could not help feeling a little doubtful herself as to the way her rival would behave. She knew that, for all her pretty, popular ways, Irma was not really a sportsman at heart. She cared much more for her own triumph, her own popularity, than for the good of the school; and she was quite clever enough to keep Shirley in the background if she felt so disposed, and prevent her from showing how well she really bowled, without letting the school at large guess the motives that actuated her. And when the great day dawned and the match against Rookfield had begun, it really seemed as though Shirley's secret fears, and Di's gloomy prognostications, were to be fulfilled.

III

Rookfield College won the toss and went in to bat first; and Irma, after arranging her field, put Dorothy Holmes on to bowl at one end and Clare Denman at the other. Shirley was placed at long-stop, a position in which, with such an excellent wicket-keeper as Di Graham, she could do very little harm and very little good either. Rookfield made short work of Dorothy's bowling, and although Clare's faster balls proved more difficult for them at first, the latter soon began to tire, and then runs came thick and fast during her overs.

By the time Irma thought fit to change the bowling, Rookfield had scored eighty-four runs for three wickets. Even then, the Captain would not give Shirley a chance. She herself took the ball from Dorothy, and when her first over was finished she signalled to Nita Carnforth to take the other end. And another fifty-four runs, during the making of which another three wickets fell, were knocked by the

College before, reluctantly enough, the Captain threw the ball to Shirley.

A hundred and thirty-eight runs for six wickets—and two of the Rookfield players nicely set! Lockhurst Abbey groaned, and watched with listless interest as its temporary head took the ball and prepared to make her first delivery. The first ball was a hopeless wide, the two next no-balls, and Lockhurst groaned again, and wondered for the hundredth time why in the world Shirley Vaughan had ever had the “cheek” to allow herself to be included in the eleven!

But as Shirley delivered the last ball of her over, Lockhurst sat up suddenly and rubbed its eyes with astonishment. Ethel Greene, the star batter of the Rookfield team, had stepped out from her crease to send the ball flying to the boundary. But something seemed to go wrong with her stroke. The ball slipped past her in some remarkable way and flew straight into Di Graham's hands, and the next moment Ethel's bails lay upon the ground.

“Stumped!” exclaimed Lockhurst Abbey, and wondered how on earth Ethel Greene had so misjudged her distance as to miss that seemingly easy-looking ball.

A hundred and forty-one for seven! This was a little better. Four more runs were added to the score during Nita's next over—then it was Shirley's turn to bowl again. This time she seemed to have settled down into a fairly even length and pace. There were no more wides and no more no-balls during her second over—and no more runs, either, though only a few people noted the significance of that fact. But when it came to her third over, and two of the Rookfield eleven were caught at mid-on from her bowling, the school began to take notice.

“Shirley Vaughan's bowling quite decently,” observed a member of the Middle School, as Rookfield's last man went out to bat.

“Hum—m—not so bad. But it's the tail-end of the team. If she'd been put on against any of their best men she'd have been knocked into a cocked hat,” replied one of the girls to whom she spoke.

“I'm not so sure of that,” said the first speaker. “She *was* on against Ethel Greene, who is quite one of Rookfield's best men, and Ethel missed her drive completely and was stumped off one of Shirley's balls.”

“Oh, *that*! That was simply a fluke. Besides, it was Di Graham who took the wicket, not Shirley.”

“It was off Shirley's bowling, though,” retorted the head girl's supporter. “There! What do you say to that! She bowled that

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man clean and tight!" Rookfield's tenth wicket had fallen to the last ball of Shirley's over.

"A fluke again, my dear child!" laughed the other. "Besides, that was Rookfield's crack bowler! she wasn't expected to make any runs. That's their last man, isn't it? Thank goodness! I thought we never were going to get them out."

"We've got to get an awful lot of runs to draw level," said another of the group. "What's their total? A hundred and fifty-five!"

"Yes, it will take some getting, won't it?" remarked another girl.

"Oh, I don't know. It's not impossible. If Irma Frensham's only in form, she could almost get it off her own bat alone," said someone else.

"Let's hope she's in form, then," said the pessimist. And then the group dropped their discussion and gave a hearty cheer, as the first two Lockhurst girls went out to bat.

It seemed, to begin with, as though Irma was in form. She opened the innings herself with Phyllis Reid as her partner, and the two knocked up forty runs between them before Phyllis was caught in the slips. Gwen Clynes was third man in, and she assisted Irma to add another nine runs during the next two overs.

"We shall do it easily," exulted Lockhurst Abbey. But Lockhurst Abbey exulted too soon. The first ball of the next over disposed of Gwen. Di Graham, who followed her, was called out by Irma on a doubtful chance and run out before she had scored at all. And Dorothy Holmes, Carol Deane, and Nita Carnforth followed her back to the pavilion in quick succession. Then Irma's wicket fell, and with it dropped the last hopes of Lockhurst Abbey.

"Only fifty-nine for seven wickets," groaned Di, who was sitting beside Shirley. "We haven't an earthly chance of getting anywhere near Rookfield's score now. We'll be lucky if we avoid a follow-on. Whyever didn't Irma put you on to bowl sooner! I daren't say anything to her—I'm afraid she'll get ratty if I do and leave you out altogether. But if she doesn't give you the ball sooner next innings, I shall go dotty! It's just as I was afraid it would be, Shirley. She put you on at the tail-end on purpose—just so that no one should see that you really *can* bowl. Why, oh, why did you go and put her in as captain!"

"She's playing well herself," remarked Shirley. "She's made forty-two runs, and she took a wicket and caught two men out when we were fielding."

"Yes—and let the other side knock up forty runs off her bowling! I've been looking at the bowling analysis and I saw! Do you know,

Shirley, old thing, you only had three runs scored off you? That wide and those two no-balls in your first over."

"Well, but I only bowled three overs," said Shirley.

"Yes, worse luck! We shouldn't be where we are now if you'd had more. Oh, goodness! There goes Evelyn's wicket. Sixty-one for eight. Now it's all U.P."

Clare Denman, who was next man in, made an unexpected stand before she was caught off a tricky ball by Rookfield's best bowler. Shirley, the last man, walked out to the wicket and took her place in a nervous way that boded no good to her side. She managed to survive her first over, and Sallie Coutts scored another four runs during the next. But Sallie managed things badly and left Shirley to face another over from Rookfield's redoubtable bowler, and at the third ball the Abbey's tenth and last wicket fell. All out for seventy-one runs!

"We shall have to follow-on, of course," said Di. "Let's hope the lunch interval will buck us up. If it doesn't, we stand a jolly good chance of being beaten by a single innings."

Such a disgrace had never fallen to the Abbey's share before, and the school felt very gloomy as it trooped down from the field to dinner, leaving the two elevens to lunch up in the pavilion. There was only a three-quarters of an hour interval for lunch, but short as the time was, most of the girls were back on the field before the Lock-hurst eleven began its second innings.

This time Irma altered the order of going-in a little. She sent Phyllis and Gwen out to open the innings, while she arrayed herself in pad and gloves to go in third man. When she was ready, she came out from the pavilion and sat down on the grass beside Nita Carnforth, who was reclining in a shady place beneath a hedge at some little distance from the rest of the players.

"This is a pretty hopeless look-out, isn't it?" she remarked.

Nita nodded.

"Yes. We do miss poor old Madge, don't we? Still, we ought not to have gone to pieces quite so badly last innings. We made quite a good start. You and Phyllis looked like getting nicely set at one time. I can't think what happened to us all!"

"Can't you?" returned Irma with a disagreeable laugh. "I don't think it's so surprising myself. When we are forced to play people who have never played in a match before in their lives, I don't see what else you can expect."

"Meaning Shirley Vaughan, I suppose?" said Nita. "But I don't think it's quite fair to put the blame upon her! She couldn't help what the rest of us did, and as she was last man in, she couldn't have

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been expected to make many runs herself. She didn't bowl half badly, you know, when we were fielding."

Irma shrugged her shoulders.

"Look whom she had to bowl against!" she said.

Nita glanced at her companion curiously.

"You don't love Shirley Vaughan much, do you?" she remarked. "Of course, I know she was only bowling against their tail. But all the same we took four wickets during the little while she was on."

"Getting wickets isn't the only thing a bowler has to think about. Keeping the other side from making runs is almost as important," said Irma—rather an injudicious remark to make, considering her own record!

"Well, *Shirley* didn't give many runs away!" said Nita, rather indignantly.

Irma said nothing. But she lifted her eyebrows in an expressive manner that suddenly made Nita feel angry and determined to prove her words.

"She didn't. I'm sure she didn't," she said, springing to her feet. "I'll go and have a look at the bowling analysis and see just how many were made." And she walked away in the direction of the scorers' tent, leaving Irma sitting alone in the shadow of the hedge.

The telegraph board showed twenty runs up, and as Nita walked away, Phyllis Reid sent the ball flying to the boundary. It struck the hedge barely a couple of yards from where Irma was sitting, and the girl was just about to rise and retrieve it, when she was anticipated by a small girl from the Third Form, Betty Haydon, who flung herself bodily into the ditch below the hedge in her anxiety to be the one to throw the ball in.

"It's all right, Irma! I've got it," panted the small fielder. But suddenly the delight in her voice changed to a scream of pain.

"Oh! Oh! It's a wasp! I'm in a wasps' nest," she shrieked. And the ball fell from her grasp and she scrambled out of the ditch and rushed wildly away, followed by a buzzing swarm of small angry insects.

Irma, taken by surprise, had no time to move away. In an instant the swarm was upon her. She was sitting on the ground, and the wasps attacked her face and head, blinding and confusing her. She struggled to her feet, but the catastrophe that had fallen upon her was so sudden and unexpected that the frightened girl had no time to gather her wits together. Instead of running away at once and trying to out-distance her attackers, she did the very worst thing possible. She turned upon them and tried to beat them off with her

hands—which course of action had the effect of making the angry insects attack her more venomously than ever. And at last, losing her head altogether, the unfortunate girl broke into terrified screams of mingled fright and pain.

"Help me! Oh, help me, help me!" she shrieked, and some of the startled girls around the pavilion began to run towards her. Then as little Betty came running towards them, crying and sobbing, pursued by several of the wasps, they hesitated and drew back. It takes a brave girl to plunge headlong into a swarm of wasps whose nest has been disturbed, and a veritable cloud of buzzing insects was enveloping poor Irma's face and shoulders.

But Shirley Vaughan kept her wits about her. Seizing a cricket pad that was lying on the bench upon which she had been sitting, the temporary head of Lockhurst Abbey rushed to the rescue. She caught Irma by the arm, and laying about her vigorously with the pad, she urged the terrified girl away from the nest.

"Run! Run! It's the only thing to do. You'll be stung to death if you stay here," she said breathlessly. And, dragging the screaming girl with her, she rushed her half across the field before she had out-distanced the wasps. Then, as Irma sank sobbing to the ground, Shirley abandoned her weapon and turned her attention to knocking off and killing the wasps that clung to Irma's clothing, and extracting those that had got entangled in the girl's hair.

"It's all right! Keep still. Don't throw yourself about so. I'll get them all off in a moment," she urged, disregarding the many stings she herself was getting as she tried to rid her terrified companion of the insects. Poor Irma, nearly mad with pain and fright, complicated her rescuer's efforts extremely by the way in which she moaned and threw herself about. And it was not until Miss Terry and one or two of the other mistresses hurried up to help, that Irma's aggressors were finally disposed of.

Play had been stopped, and nearly all the girls were gathered round at a respectful distance, watching Shirley's heroic battle with the wasps. Messengers had been sent down to the school to summon the trained nurse who was in charge of the dormitory arrangements, and Sister came hurrying over the field in a short while, armed with ammonia and brandy. Then Betty and Irma, the latter almost in a state of collapse, were borne away to the sickroom to have their wounds attended to.

"What about you, Shirley?" asked Miss Terry. "Are you stung anywhere?"

"Nothing to speak of, Miss Terry," answered Shirley.

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"Hadn't you better go with Sister, too, dear, and make quite sure?" said Miss Lawson. But Shirley, embarrassed by all the attention she was receiving, replied quickly:

"Oh no, thank you, Miss Lawson. It's really nothing. I shall be quite all right until the match is over. Don't you think, Miss Terry, we had better get on with the game now?"

"Yes, I think we had. Who is to take on the captaincy, Shirley, now that Irma's gone?"

"I'll take it on myself, I think, Miss Terry," said the temporary head. "I'll get Gwen and Di to give me advice if any is needed."

"Don't you want to play a substitute for your lost man? We shall be very pleased to let you do so," said the captain of the rival eleven. But Shirley shook her head.

"No, thank you very much. It's jolly sporting of you to suggest it—but I think we'd rather carry on and play the game according to the rules," she said. And the rest of the Lockhurst team being of the same opinion, the match was resumed.

"What's the score?" asked Shirley, as she and Di made their way to a shady place far removed from the pavilion and the wasps' nest. "Twenty-four and no wickets down? Come, that's quite a good beginning. Perhaps we shall escape a one innings defeat after all!"

The Lockhurst Eleven certainly seemed determined to do their best to make up for their lost man. Phyllis and Gwen carried the score to thirty-seven before Gwen was dismissed for twenty-five runs. Di played a splendid innings and knocked up forty-two runs before her career was brought to an untimely end by a fine catch on the part of Rookfield's square leg. Nita, who went in next—Shirley acting upon Gwen's advice had altered the order of going in a little—sent her first ball for two, and her second to the boundary for four, and Lockhurst Abbey cheered enthusiastically as it realised that a single innings defeat had been saved, and whatever happened now, Rookfield College would have to bat again.

After that the score mounted slowly but steadily. Ninety-one for four; ninety-nine for five; a hundred and ten for six; a hundred and sixteen for seven; a hundred and twenty for eight; and then Shirley, tenth and last man in, was facing Sallie Coutts at the other end of the wicket, determined to break her duck this time, in spite of the pain from her stung hands.

She broke it quite satisfactorily. The telegraph registered a hundred and thirty runs before Sallie's wicket went down before a fast ball with a nasty break on it; and Shirley carried her bat from the field with the pleased consciousness that she had added six runs to the school's total.

She received quite an ovation as she came off the field. Lockhurst Abbey had seen with admiration the plucky way in which she had gone to Irma's rescue, and guiltily conscious of having given its head girl but scanty encouragement hitherto, was determined to do its best to make up for its omission.

A hasty tea was partaken of by the two elevens, and then Lockhurst Abbey went out to field again and Rookfield College prepared itself for victory. An hour and a half to play, and only forty-seven runs to make to win!

"We ought to do it all right," remarked the Rookfield Captain to the rest of her team as Ethel Greene and Marjorie Manners went out to open the second innings on behalf of the visitors. And—"Not much chance of saving the match," sighed Lockhurst Abbey, as it settled down to watch the finish of the game.

"Shirley, you're going to put yourself on to bowl right away, aren't you?" pleaded Di as the Lockhurst eleven went out to take their places in the field. And Shirley nodded her head.

"Yes," she said. And she took the ball in her hands and tossed it into the air, catching it as it came down again with an odd feeling of exultation in her heart. For in spite of the pain from the stings in her hands and arms, a pain which was momentarily increasing, Shirley had an inward conviction that this time things were going to go right.

During the next forty minutes, Lockhurst Abbey witnessed what was perhaps the most surprising end to a cricket match it had ever seen. It saw what looked like inevitable defeat turned into delirious victory. It saw Rookfield's star batsmen, players who had successfully defied all bowling during their previous innings, go down one by one before the balls Shirley Vaughan sent down to them. It saw Ethel Greene and Marjorie Manners come out with contemptible twos and threes to their credit. It saw Rookfield's redoubtable captain, who had carried her bat for a century twice during that very same season, return to her friends with an ignominious duck. It saw panic taking possession of the tail of the Rookfield team, and finally it saw the whole side dismissed for thirty runs!

"And if only Shirley could have bowled both ends, they wouldn't have made half of them!" exulted Di Graham, as the Lockhurst eleven gathered together, and having given the customary three cheers for their vanquished opponents, waited in becoming modesty for the ovation the school was preparing to give them.

The applause was vigorous enough to satisfy anybody when it came. The whole school gathered round its victorious team, and cheered and cheered and waved and shouted, and even attempted to carry Shirley

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Vaughan shoulder-high from the field. But Shirley herself interrupted this last ebullition of excitement and brought the tumult to an abrupt conclusion by suddenly turning white and nearly fainting away on the spot.

"Shirley! What is it? What's the matter?" cried Di in alarmed astonishment as she caught her half-fainting friend in her arms. But Shirley was too far gone to answer; and it was not until some half-hour later, when the head girl had been taken to the sickroom and ministered to by Sister, that the truth became known.

"She was stung—quite badly! All up her hands and arms—almost as badly as Irma! Sister says she can't think how she kept on playing. She must have been in the most awful pain, you know, all the time!"

"And to play like she did, too! Wasn't it plucky of her! Poor old Shirley. We've given her a rotten time this term. Fancy her having it in her to behave like that! Why, she's a regular heroine!" That was the conclusion the school arrived at, and it is not surprising, when the reason for Shirley's sudden collapse became known throughout the Abbey.

"I always told you Shirley had grit!" said Di Graham savagely, to the rest of her fellow-prefects.

Certainly Shirley had grit! She would not even remain in the sickroom for long, although Sister was unwilling to let her go. She appeared at Chapel with her hands bandaged and her right arm in a sling. And after prayers were over, she took up her position as usual at the door of Great Hall, to call out the names of the various dormitories as their occupants filed by the headmistress on their way to bed.

This saying "good-night" to her pupils at the close of each school day was a ceremony that Miss Lawson rarely neglected. But on this particular evening, the Head was a little late in arriving, and as the girls flocked from Chapel into Great Hall and saw their temporary head girl standing alone by the farther door, a murmur arose amongst them.

"Good old Shirley! Three cheers for our head girl!" cried somebody in the background. The slight encouragement was all the school needed, and the next moment the Hall was filled with the sound of cheering.

"Hush! Hush!" cried Shirley distractedly, trying to make her voice heard above the tumult.

But, try as she might, her efforts to quiet the uproar were useless until Miss Lawson herself put in a belated appearance. The cheers

died down then with startling suddenness and Shirley, flushed and embarrassed, turned to the headmistress.

"I'm very sorry, Miss Lawson," she said apologetically. But Miss Lawson seemed to be in an unusually amiable frame of mind that night. Perhaps she guessed the reason of the uproar in the Hall and was not altogether displeased at it. At all events, she smiled benignly at her head girl, and Shirley, recovering her usual calmness of demeanour, began to call the names of the dormitories aloud.

But although her outward appearance may have been as usual, beneath her calm exterior the heart of the head girl of Lockhurst Abbey was dancing with delight. For she knew now with certainty that the events of the afternoon had cleared the way for her. Di's loyal help and the sacrifice of the beloved music had not been in vain. Shirley Vaughan had won her place in the hearts of the girls—her difficulties as Second in Command were over.

Book-Gardens and Book-Gardeners

Some Specimens from Favourite Authors

BY ETHEL TALBOT

The kiss of the Sun for Gladness,
The Song of the Birds for Mirth ;
One is nearer God's Heart in a Garden
Than anywhere else on Earth.

MOST of us know those lines ; but perhaps we remember them oftenest when we're not able to enjoy the pleasures that gardens afford ! Most of life's pleasure lies in either looking backward or in looking ahead ; that is Maeterlinck's theory at least, but I am inclined to agree with the author of the "Blue Bird," and so I, for one, take care to make time for certain "looking back pleasures" with a particular flavour of their own. When I'm in the mood for something I can't get—a garden, for instance, when I'm mewed up in a hot room in town with no prospect of anything else for months!—I saunter across to my book-shelves and enjoy a pleasant hour or so in someone else's garden long, long ago perhaps, or *not* so long ago, perhaps.

It is wonderful what an amount of happiness one can get that way ; why, the very room which seemed so stuffy and airless an hour before becomes scented with Laetitia Dale's roses, or feels the cooler for the ministrations of the watering-pot of that spinster-aunt whom Mr. Tupman of the *Pickwick Papers* found so attractive ; or somehow seems the less breathless for the cooling effect of the thunderstorm after which Mrs Pendyce (whom Galsworthy has immortalised in his *Country House*) walked quietly in her garden. She had passed through, perhaps, what was the greatest ordeal of her life, but, having come through triumphant, she "took a white rose in her fingers,"—to quote the very last lines of the book—"and with her smiling lips she kissed its face."

Oh, yes. Gardens have meant much, much, to many other folk besides ourselves.

What about the owner of "Woodley," for instance? "Woodley" was

the house where Mr. Holbrook lived, you remember, the more-than-middle-aged one-time lover of Miss Matty as she had been in the days of her youth. And to Woodley drove the still fluttering Miss Matty from Cranford, when youth had left her, to walk for the first time in the garden which might have been her own to tend if life had gone a little differently. An "old-fashioned garden," it was, "where roses and currant-bushes touched each other, and where the feathery asparagus formed a pretty background to the pinks and gillyflowers; there was no drive up to the door. We got out at a little gate, and walked up a straight box-edged path." I can almost smell the sun-warmed box-edging as I read, cannot you? And the pungence of the currant-leaves. And I can see it *all*—every detail—with the aid of that "inner eye, the bliss of solitude." Can't you?

Dickens understood the atmosphere that a garden can create, too; to every garden its own particular atmosphere, of course, and he understood *that* as well. He pictures the grim uncared-for garden of the "Rookery," where little David Copperfield was born, and where a part of his half-frightened childhood was spent in quiet games. Elm-trees grew at the bottom of *that* garden, and in the wind they used to bend towards each other as though they were exchanging secrets. Rooks had built in those elm-trees (that was the reason of the house-name, of course); and their old nests swung in the wind "like wrecks upon a stormy sea." Here is another vivid garden picture, very different from the last, but drawn with no less sure a master-hand.

It was in a garden that Clennam (of *Little Dorrit* fame) accepted roses from Minnie Meagles; there was an avenue of trees in *that* garden, and they passed together, arm-in-arm along its deep shade and "out at the arch of light at the other end." Somehow both of them would always remember that avenue on that particular night, I think, for so much was gone through before they reached that far-off beacon of light. "The trees seemed to close up behind them in the darkness, like their own perspective of the past."

Roses seem to grow in almost every one of the book-gardens: do you wonder? Even Miss Betsy Trotwood, the stern, loved her roses; she was holding her pruning-knife when poor little ragged David introduced his tattered self to her. Laetitia Dale—the Doctor's daughter in the *Egoist*—grew roses in the porch of her father's cottage;—roses which seemed more attractive in the eyes of human Clara Middleton than did those severely trained to adorn the trim beds in the Park belonging to her fiancé,—a "park of rolling green and spreading trees."

"Let me escort you to the garden, my love," says Sir Willoughby.

"I care most for wild flowers," cries his Clara, inwardly recoiling from the artificiality of the man. For it was not given to Sir Willoughby to be able to appreciate the real charm of a garden as Clara and Laetitia understood it. Perhaps some of Miss Austen's heroines might have accompanied him willingly enough through the orderly sequence of paths, listening the while he told them what he had paid to his gardeners and of the trouble he had taken to produce perfection everywhere. Clara was too much as *we* are; *she* could not enjoy such a garden stroll.

And now for other gardens. A remembrance of the inn-garden mentioned in the *Pickwick Papers*, where Tracy Tupman was smitten with the charms of the "spinster aunt," must bring a smile as we read. There was a bower in that garden, do you remember? with honeysuckle, and jessamine growing, "one of those sweet retreats which men erect for the accommodation of spiders!" writes Dickens. Here the flirtation took place—the lady bearing a watering-pot "which shook like an infant's rattle," under the stress of her emotion.

It is a far cry from that scene to another which always seems amusing to me when I think of it; imagine Mr. Collins (from the pages of *Pride and Prejudice*) taking the Bennets for a stroll in his garden. It was "large, well laid out, and to the cultivation of it he attended himself." He could number the fields which lay in any direction; he could count the trees in the most distant clump in view; "every prospect was pointed out with a minuteness which left beauty entirely behind;" he led the way through "every walk and cross-walk and scarcely allowed them an interval to utter the praises he asked for." Do you wonder that Elizabeth Bennet was amused? To my way of thinking Mr. Collins had no more part nor lot in a garden than had Sir Willoughby Patterne, himself.

A last garden which is amusing to read of—but which always has had, to me, a pathetic side as well—is to be found between the pages of *Great Expectations*. In London that garden grew. And in grimy Walworth, of all unlikely spots. Do you remember Wemmick's garden? It was a little plot that the hard-headed lawyer's clerk looked after, himself, and it was laid out round the little wooden cottage which he shared with his ancient father.

"Looks pretty, don't it?" said Wemmick.

There was a real flag-staff, and a plank drawbridge over a two-foot ditch in that garden. There was a gun, too, which went off regularly at nine o'clock—a gun protected from the weather by an umbrella! There was a pigsty away at the back; fowls too, and some growing cucumbers. Also there was a bower, set in a kind of

maze of tiny paths; and when the bower was reached there was a tiny lakelet close at hand in which a toy-mill could be set going.

But I have never smiled in my mind at Wemmick's garden effort,—not as though it were a ridiculous garden, at any rate. For at the back of the gardener's mind there lay courage and perseverance, cheery optimism against difficulties, and above all a large, kindly, humorous love of his old failing father.

"A fine place of my son's, sir," cried the old man. "These beautiful works upon it ought to be kept together by the nation for the people's enjoyment!"

"You're as proud of it as Punch, ain't you, Aged?" said Wemmick, contemplating the old man with his hard face really softened.

And I, contemplating *his* face with that "inner eye," feel inclined to echo the Aged's words. "A fine place!" Oh yes, I am pretty sure we could be "near to God's heart" in *that* queerest of queer little gardens, too.

The Curing of "Miss Finnikin"

A Story of a School Feud

BY DORIS A. POCOCK

HER real name was Fanny Keene—we knew it was, because we had seen it written in a book of hers; but from the moment Patsie Cameron first turned it into "Miss Finnikin," and called her that, the name stuck, and she was never known as anything else—"Miss Finnikin" was too exactly right!

That's to say, we always spoke *of* her as that, among ourselves, for to her face we never called her anything but "Miss Keene". We shouldn't have dared, for she would have been down on us like a cart-load of bricks for what she would probably have called our "reprehensible levity" if she had known we had any sort of nickname for her, although Miss Blundell, who had been the Junior House mistress before her, used not to mind a bit when Babs Thompson, who's quite a kiddie, would jump on her lap and hug her and call her "Bundle darling"—and yet she used to keep ten times better order than Miss Finnikin could when *she* came!

But you see, the Bundle, who was young and jolly and everything that a junior mistress should be, had made the (from our point of view) horrible mistake of leaving St. Dunstan's to get married—which, as Patsie said, was all very fine for *her* but perfectly sickening for *us*! And just *how* sickening, we only realised when we found that we had got to put up with Miss Finnikin in exchange.

Not that Miss F. was really objectionable, although she was dull and fat and middle-aged-to-elderly, and altogether a most depressing come-down after the dear Bundle; still, she was perfectly kind to us and all that—it wasn't a case for the S.P.C.C. nor anything of that sort. It was simply that she was so fearfully fussy, and proper, and prim—exactly like school-mistresses nearly always are in books and, in these days, scarcely ever in real life!—and naturally, after the jolly, free-and-easy time we had had with the Bundle, we simply couldn't stand it. She expected us to "speak when we were spoken to" and

never otherwise, and to say "Miss Keene" with every other word, and I really think she would have liked us all to curtsy as we came into the classroom; and about other things besides manners she was just as fussy. For instance, when Kate Armstrong, who's the shining star of the Junior House in the brainy way, showed up an essay which was a bit untidy-looking but which none of the rest of us could have written to save our lives, Miss Finnikin wasn't half as much interested in the compo. being so frightfully good as she was in the fact that Kate had made a blot in one corner; and she made Hilda Ross stop in the sanny. for a whole day, when there was a cricket match on, on suspicion of measles, simply and solely because there were a few cases in the neighbourhood and Hilda had had the bad luck to give a couple of sneezes; and it was the same with everything—finnikin prunes and prisms and everlasting fuss!

The final crux came over the gloves.

Miss Finnikin suddenly issued a mandate that we were always, rain or shine, to wear gloves when we went out in "crocodile"—indeed, she seemed rather shocked that we didn't. Now, if it had been winter or St. Dunstan's a town school, I suppose it would have been a pretty reasonable request; but in the depths of the country, and as we never had had to bother about them in the summer before except on special occasions, we didn't see why we should have to begin now. But Miss Finnikin wouldn't give us any reason beyond saying "it was only lady-like and proper" (*proper!*), and when Patsie tried to argue about it a bit and get at the *why* of the wretched gloves, she said, "Patricia, little girls should be seen and not heard"—shutting Patsie up as though she'd been the merest kid, when she's nearly fourteen!

But it happened that I was walking with Patsie—I generally do as she's my chum—and about half-way home I noticed that she was silently giggling to herself; and although when I asked her what was up she only said, "Mary, little girls should be seen and not heard!" *à la* Miss Finnikin, I somehow guessed, knowing Patsie and her ways, that we hadn't heard the last of those gloves.

It happened next day that it was recitation-class morning. Now, it's the rule at St. Dunstan's that you choose for yourself what poetry you'll learn for recitation, provided only that you pick real, well-known poetry (no nonsense-verses allowed!) and learn not less than eight lines at a time. I believe looking out poems for ourselves is supposed to "encourage a love of classical reading," or something, and it certainly *is* a lot more interesting than just having two or three inches of "Casabianca" or "The Wreck of the Hesperus" set you to learn. Well, that morning Patsie came to class with a very new-looking book that she'd

got out of the School Library, and said to Miss Finnikin when it was her turn, "It's a selection of *modern* poetry, Miss Keene—that counts, doesn't it?"

"Certainly, Patricia—you cannot have too wide a range of poetic reading," said poor dear Miss Finnikin, little knowing the trap she was walking into.

"I've learnt this one—'To a Lady Seen from the Train,' by Frances Cornford," said Patsie innocently. Then she stepped back and put her hands behind her, looking as meek and good as a prim little Sunday School girl, and recited—

Oh, why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
Missing so much and so much?
Fat white woman whom nobody loves,
Why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
When the grass is soft as the breasts of doves,
And shivering-sweet to the touch?
Oh, why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
Missing so much and so much?

If you should happen not to have read that poem before, please don't imagine that I made it up myself or anything of that sort—I only wish I *had*, or could! It's a perfectly real poem that comes in a real book of modern poetry, and, as I said, it's by Frances Cornford. But you *should* have heard Patsie recite it, while the rest of us just gasped, and shook with suppressed giggles which we simply didn't dare to let explode. Her face was a study—there was such simple wonder in it, and in her voice, as she said, "Oh, *why* do you walk through the fields in *gloves*?"—and, talking of *her* face, you should only have seen Miss Finnikin's!

I think myself that Miss Finnikin's best counter-stroke would have been to have pretended she hadn't seen the point and taken no notice whatever—that would have been awfully disappointing to *us* and therefore a score for *her*; but instead, she got as red as a turkey-cock and fairly bristled, and read Patsie a lecture which lasted for the rest of class-time—the loveliest lecture, about Patsie's "distressing flippancy" and "culpable levity" and "reprehensible impertinence". We enjoyed it almost as much as we had the poem!

Needless to say, the "crocodile" went out in gloves that day—Miss Finnikin held a sort of parade-inspection before the walk to make sure we'd all got them. But all the same, we felt it was "van-tage in" to *us*; and as we were coming in again, Patsie whispered to me, "Mark my words, Mary, the glove war isn't over yet. That poem was only the first point in the game. Look here!"

Miss Finnikin was a few steps in front of us and not looking, and Patsie pulled off one of her detested gloves—they happened to be gauntleted ones—and flung it down behind Miss Finnikin's back.

"That's my challenge!" she said, and picked up the glove. "She ought to have lifted the gauntlet herself really, but that can't be helped; it means red war anyway; and I know what my next move is to be. What's wrong with Miss Finnikin is, that she's evidently been wrapped in cotton-wool all her life, which accounts for her wanting *us* to be ditto, and the best cure for that is a good, bracing return to the simple life. Therefore, for the time being, I'm going to turn myself into a sort of limited company for supplying school-mistresses with the Simple Life and Seeing that They Get It!"

And with that she explained to me, and to Dot Fraser, who happened to be there and had noticed the challenge, what her new scheme was. You see, St. Dunstan's is in the midst of very wild, heathy-heathery sort of country, and Miss Finnikin, who had never stayed among moors before, had let out that she had never seen cotton-grass and, being a bit of a botanist, was keen to do so; so we planned that we would offer to take her up to a part of the moor where it grew—omitting to mention the interesting detail that where there is cotton-grass there also, in greater or lesser degree, is *bog*!—"and *then*," said Patsie, with a gleam in her eyes which I knew very well, "once we've got her out there, among the crags and the brambles and, above all, the blessed *bog*, it shan't be *our* fault if she doesn't get such a return to savage nature as should cure her *of* prisms for a month to come!"

We put Dot on to issue the invitation because we thought it was more likely to be accepted than if it came from people with *our* reputations; and Miss Finnikin, walking into the new trap as easily as she had into the old one, jumped at it. Indeed, I fancy she thought it was meant for an olive-branch!—and when the time came for the expedition, and she found us all three waiting for her, punctual to the minute and neatly gloved, she set off almost purring.

Of course, it wouldn't have been her if she hadn't made a fuss about the heat and the climb and the distance and the roughness and everything else, and we were dreadfully afraid she would insist on turning back; but the magnet of the cotton-grass lured her on, and although we were careful to pick out the roughest and stoniest and most awkward and brambley ways for her benefit, we still managed to get her right up on the moor. Then, when there was simply nothing but wildness all round us, and the air was smelling all honey-hot with heather and sharp with the tang of the bog-myrtle (I do think a

real moor is simply ripping, don't you?), Dot pointed out some silvery-white patches of fluffiness and said, "There, Miss Fin—Keene, that's cotton-grass!"

"Ah!" sighed Miss Finnikin, stopping to fan her face, pin up her skirt which had been torn by the brambles, and extract stones from her very muddy shoes which were miles too dainty for rough walking, "I'm glad our efforts are to be rewarded"; and she took a few mincing steps forward over the scrushy ling, murmuring warnings about adders, but drew back exclaiming, "Dear, dear! It's all wet and muddy here. I'm afraid we can't reach the cotton-grass after all."

"Oh! It's all right, Miss Keene—just keep on the lumpy parts. Follow me!" cried Dot, springing forward and beckoning just like a will-o'-the-wisp.

You see, Dot is used to moors and as light as a fairy, so the idea was that *she* would be able to cross the bog all right, springing from tuft to tuft of grass and heather and avoiding the more squashy places, and that Miss Finnikin, encouraged by her example, would try to follow and be sure to go floundering in—result, such an unspeakable mess as would be a most fitting punishment for being faddy about appearances. What we hadn't reckoned on was, firstly, that Dot would somehow slip on a tussock and go splashing in herself, and secondly, that that particular bit of bog was much worse than most we had encountered.

Things happen so awfully suddenly sometimes, don't they? One moment Patsie and I were laughing together over our trick—and the next, Dot was floundering in the midst of the bog, and shrieking out, "Help me, help me! It's deep—I'm going in—I'm sinking—I can't get out!"

'Oh, it was ghastly! The most horrible minute I've ever lived through! Patsie started to dash into the bog after Dot, but was caught and held back by Miss Finnikin; I frantically tore up some gorse not caring what the prickles did to me, to hold out to her, but it wasn't strong enough nor long enough to be any good; and there was Dot struggling and screaming in the bog, and getting deeper in every instant!

And then it was that Miss Finnikin seemed to change altogether—you know how some people *do* in emergencies; it was as though all her finnikin-ness fell away and the real *her* showed up.

"Dot," she commanded, "don't struggle—*roll!* Patricia and Mary, keep back!"—and with that she started to wade into the bog.

"Miss Keene, Miss Keene, you'll be drowned!" sobbed Patsie; but Miss Finnikin seemed to have decided to chance that, and as she was very tall, mercifully the bog, although it could have drowned a midget

like Dot, wasn't deep enough to swamp her, although she was nearly up to her neck before she succeeded in getting Dot safely out on to the heather.

What they both looked like when the rescue was over almost passes description. Dot was half-fainting from shock and absolutely masked in mud all over, and as for Miss Finnikin, the neat, the immaculate, the upholder of prunes and prisms and perpetual gloves, she was simply dripping with bog-water and plastered with mud from the shoulders downwards! We couldn't say our plot to get her in a mess hadn't succeeded—it *had*, beyond our wildest dreams; *but*—

If ever two people felt abject, grovelling worms, Patsie and I did at that moment; we should have liked to abase ourselves at Miss Finnikin's muddy feet.

Of course we owned up—it was the only decent, possible thing to do under the circumstances; we confessed to Miss Finnikin how it was all our fault—that though of course we had never foreseen anything dreadful or dangerous, we *had* meant to trick her into getting in a mess; and if you'll believe me, all the dear old thing (yes, I meant that—that's how I think of her, *now*!) said about it was, "Let us say no more about it—I think the punishment has been equal to the offence."

The question was how on earth to get back, for we were a good three miles from St. Dunstan's, and it was simply impossible to walk it with Dot semi-collapsed from shock and she and Miss Finnikin both in the state of mud and wet that they were. But luckily, soon after leaving the moor, we came to a little country inn, where we were able to get shelter and tea, and a good fire to dry the two victims at, and the promise of a horse-and-trap to drive us back afterwards.

There happened to be a long glass in the room we went into, and Miss Finnikin, catching sight of herself in it (and she certainly was a startling spectacle just then!), looked perfectly aghast. "How you children are ever to have a grain of respect for me again——!" she exclaimed involuntarily. She didn't seem to realise a bit how we were respecting her—*hard*, with every bit of the *admiring* part of ourselves—for the first time!

After tea, while we were waiting for the trap to be ready, Miss Finnikin, who must have been pretty well done up with all she'd been through, fell into a doze by the fire; and Patsie and Dot and I sat together and whispered about all that had happened.

"I feel I can never, *never* make it up to her!" Dot murmured rather shakily.

"So do I; she's simply a heroine!" I answered remorsefully,

glancing over at Miss Finnikin, who certainly wasn't looking a romantic heroine, snoring placidly with her mouth open and nodding in her sleep till she made creases of double chins.

Patsie followed my glance, and the sudden gleam came into her face. "H'sh!" she whispered, and putting her finger to her lips, tiptoed across to Miss Finnikin and softly kissed her.

Five minutes later, when Miss Finnikin woke up, Patsie said daringly, "Miss Keene, you owe me a pair of gloves!"

For a moment Miss Finnikin looked rather dazed—I suppose she'd forgotten the old saying about having to pay gloves to anyone who kisses you in your sleep without waking you; then she saw the point, and——

Well, I think she must have been beastly lonely at St. Dunstan's, or something, and *wanting* people to like her and kiss her, for she just held out her arms and said, "You shall have them, my dears—but you must pay me for them again—all of you!"

So we all, Dot first and foremost, fairly tumbled ourselves on to her lap to hug her—and it was lucky that the trap was announced just then, or I'm afraid we should have made babies of ourselves!

Miss Finnikin really *did* pay Patsie the gloves (the sweetest little pair—lavender kid, with tiny buttons—you should have seen her swanking in them!); and she also modified her orders about our always wearing gloves, and altogether from that time gradually became much less fussy and tiresome; and I don't think she found *us* so tiresome either, or anyhow we all tried jolly hard not to let her—and I really think that's all.

All—except that our still speaking of her as "Miss Finnikin" isn't just a teasing nickname any longer; it's our *pet* name for her now

Told by a Darky "Mammy"

A "Nancy" Story from the West Indies

BY PATRICK VAUX

MANY of the stories which the darky "mammies" in the West Indies tell their children, or the children of their masters' or mistresses' families, are very delightful. Here is one which has often been told in a hut thatched with palmetto leaves, that stands on a little key or cay of the Lesser Antilles. A verandah of green bamboo shades it ; the mangosteen and the cashew, the plantain, banana, and golden shaddock edge the well-filled clearing, that runs down to a delightful beach of coral sand. Here Granny Dorcas has told this tale many a time to the pickaninnies at bed-time.

Once upon a time there were two sisters, who lived very happily together. At length one of them fell sick and died, leaving a little daughter in the care of her sister. This sister grew very cruel, and treated her niece very badly, making her a drudge to herself and daughter. One day the child broke a water-jar, and was turned out of the hut till she could bring back one as good. As she was going along crying, she came to a large cotton-tree, under which was sitting a woman without a head. The old woman at once asked her, "Well, my pickaninny, wha' you see?"

"Oh, grandee," answered the child, "me no see nuttin."

"Good pickaninny," cried the old woman, "an', sure, good comes to you."

Not far away stood a coco-nut tree, and here sat another old lady, also without a head. The same question was asked the girl, and she gave the same answer, that had already pleased so much.

On she walked, and on, and began to feel faint through want of food, when under a mahogany tree she saw not only a third old woman but one who, this time, had got a head. She stopped, and made her best curtsy.

"How d'ye, grandee?" she asked ; using the word "grandee," for

it is always a term of respect given by the negroes in the West Indies to an old woman.

"How d'ye, my pickaninny. Wha's maka you no' look well?"

"Grandee, me berry hungry!"

"My li'le pickaninny, you see dat hut yander. Go da, an' you wi' find rice in one pot. If you see one black puss, mind you give him him share."

The child hastened off to the hut; the black puss made its appearance, and she gave it a share of the cooked rice, after which it went away. She had hardly finished her meal when the mistress of the hut came in, and told her she might help herself to three eggs out of the hen-house; but that she must not take any of the talking ones. The girl then went into the hen-house, and, no sooner was she there, than a great many eggs began crying out "Take me, take me!"

Yet, although the talking eggs were large and clean, she was obedient, and searched around till she had collected three dirty-looking eggs that did not talk. The mistress of the hut then told her to go home without fear, but not to forget to break one of the eggs under each of the trees, near which she had seen an old woman in the morning.

The girl did just as she was told. When she broke the first egg, out of it came a water-jar, exactly the same as that she had broken. When she broke the second, out came a great sugar estate. When she broke the third, out came a splendid carriage and pair of prancing horses, coachman and footman. Overjoyed, she got into the carriage and was driven back to her aunt's; there she delivered up the water-jar, and told how a strange "grandee" had made her as grand as herself; and then she departed in triumph to her sugar estate.

Her aunt almost went out of her head with envy, and at once she sent off her own daughter to search for the same good fortune. Her daughter found the cotton-tree and the headless old woman, and had the same question put to her. But she did not return the same answer.

"Wha' me see?" she cried, "me see one ol' woman widout head."

"Bad girl," returned the old woman, "an', sure, bad comes to you."

Matters were managed no better when she arrived at the coco-nut palm; and when she came to the mahogany-tree she was rude to the old woman there. However, she was given permission to eat rice in "dat hut yander," and told to give a share to the black puss. She ate all the rice herself, and did not hesitate to tell her hostess that she had fed black puss till it could eat no more.

The old lady then sent her to the hen-house to gather three eggs,

as her cousin had done. But, on being told not to take the talking eggs, she made up her mind that they were the more valuable, and she took three of those that talked the most. Then, fearing lest their chattering would reveal her disobedience, she thought it best not to return into the hut, and accordingly she set off on the way home.

Everything had happened just as her cousin had told. What was about to befall now?

She had not, however, got as far as the mahogany tree, when, her curiosity growing too strong to be resisted, she broke one of the eggs. To her disappointment, it proved to be empty. In a rage she threw the second on the ground. Out of it came a great yellow snake that glided towards her, hissing dreadfully. Away ran the girl; a fallen bamboo lay in her path, she stumbled over it, and fell. In the fall her third egg was broken. Out rushed a huge wild animal that straight-way slew and devoured her—as a warning to all rude, disobedient, and untruthful children.

Long before Granny Dorcas has finished telling this "Nancy" tale to the little woolly pates with their wide-open ears and mouths, the short twilight of the tropics has faded away, and the fast-gathering darkness is hiding the valleys and climbing the hills of the Island of St. John's near the little key. The stars are already shining out so brilliantly, and the fireflies are dancing so brightly among the shrubs and under the she-oaks, that Cudjoe, the pickaninnies' father, has no trouble at all in making fast his boat and bringing up his haul of fish, just in time to hear the end of the story.

But there are three little darky folks so much impressed by it, that gladly enough they scuttle off to the sleeping apartment of the hut, with its peep of light from a smoky kerosene lamp.

Aunt Theresa's Thermos

And How it Served in an Emergency

BY VIOLET M. METHLEY

IT was not one of the ordinary thermoses,—or perhaps it ought to be thermi, or thermæ or something!—which you can buy for about two-and-eleven. Aunt Theresa's thermos cost pounds and pounds, and it was silverplated and covered with green leather. It had a kind of woolly overcoat, too, to save it from being scratched, or to keep it warm, and there were straps to hang it over one's shoulder.

It was the sort of thing you could *never buy* again, even if you had the money—and the worst of it was that Aunt Theresa simply insisted on lending it to Sydney for her summer holiday.

"It will be indispensable to you, my dear child," she said. "I know that you will find it simply invaluable, and it will make all the difference to your pleasure."

And so it did—although not quite in the way that Aunt Theresa meant!

Sydney is my greatest friend at school. That is why I am writing this story for her, because she's not much good at things of that sort, and *I've* won a "Little Folks" essay competition. And this story is really so exciting that it would be waste not to write it down.

It had been arranged that Sydney should come to us in Bristol for the last half of the summer holidays. For the first month she was going to a farm on Exmoor—a place called Moorcoombe. The farmer's wife had been Sydney's nurse when she was little, and she's a perfect darling, and teaches Sydney to make butter, and milk cows, and feed fowls and other jolly things like that. And as there is a pony, and heaps of dogs and things, Sydney never minded a bit being just alone with the Cookes.

It would all have been as nice as possible, if it hadn't been for the thermos. From the very first it was a great responsibility. Sydney was frightfully afraid that it would get broken on the journey, although she rolled it up in her best jumper and three pairs of stockings, but it

arrived at Moorcoombe safely, and she put it away carefully in a drawer.

There it stayed, quite comfortably, until the very last day of the time at the farm. Although Sydney always had picnic lunches and teas on the moor, she carried her tea in a bottle, and never once used Aunt Theresa's thermos. She didn't dare.

Then, on this last day, Sydney suddenly remembered how fearfully hurt and offended Aunt Theresa would be, when she heard this. She simply dared not go back and tell the old lady that she had never used the precious thermos, and she determined to take it out for *one* last picnic, so that she could say truthfully what a beauty it was and how boiling it kept the tea.

Sydney and Mrs. Cooke filled it most carefully, and were very particular not to put in the tea too hot. Then Sydney hung it round her by the straps, and took the basket with the cakes and sandwiches and apples and sketching things, and started off for the Pixie's Parlour.

This was Sydney's favourite picnic place on the moor. It is a kind of mossy, heathery hollow, scooped out, with a thick hedge of gorse-bushes all round the top, making it beautifully shady. When you lie down at the bottom, you can see nothing but blue sky and purple heather and yellow gorse.

Well, Sydney walked to the Pixie's Parlour—it's about three miles from the Farm—very carefully, because she was so afraid of falling down and smashing that thermos. And just because she was so careful, she kept slipping on the turf and stubbing her toes—you know the way one does! Still, she got there safely and made a soft nest for the thermos, and lay down with a sigh of relief, to eat apples and read *The Tale of Two Cities*.

There isn't much to tell about the picnic; it is the *afterwards* that matters. But the tea in the thermos was only just warm, and rather nasty: they had been so afraid of cracking the wretched thing.

After lunch, Sydney began to sketch a lovely tuft of bluebells, just as they grew, and she forgot everything else, just as she always does when she is drawing or painting. The first thing she noticed was that the sun had stopped shining—and *that* really was rather extraordinary last summer. Sydney looked up, and saw that the sky and the sun were all clouded over, and hidden. But they weren't ordinary clouds; it was more like yellow-brown mist sweeping along, quite low down—and then Sydney saw that it was not clouds or mist at all, but *smoke*.

As she scrambled up the side of the hollow, she noticed that there was a tremendously strong smell of burning, and when she got to the

top and looked away over the moor—well, Sydney says she *felt* herself turn pale. It was no wonder! Not much more than the length of our playing-field away, a great wall of flames and smoke was simply sweeping along towards her.

Something had set the heather and gorse on fire; and you know how quickly those fires spread last summer. The flames rose high in the air, orange and scarlet, huge clouds of smoke swirled along, and the fire came on with a tremendous roaring and crackling. I suppose the noise had somehow passed over Sydney's head, as she sat at the bottom of the hollow, which was why she hadn't heard it before.

As she looked, the flames seemed to give a kind of leap forward, and Sydney did just what you or I, or anyone else, would have done. She just turned and ran off across the moor, away from the fire—and Sydney is a pretty good runner.

But she had not gone far before she stopped. All of a sudden, she remembered Aunt Theresa's thermos, which she had left in its soft nest in the Pixie's Parlour,—left to be burnt up by the fire! I suppose if Sydney had had time to think, she would hardly have gone back. But she hadn't time, and she only remembered how awful it would be to go back to Aunt Theresa and tell her that the precious thermos had been burnt to ashes.

Before she really knew quite what she was doing, Sydney was running back to the Pixie's Parlour to fetch it—straight towards the fire.

Well, she got to the hollow before the flames did. She dashed down, snatched up the thermos, clambered up again, and began to run as she had never run before, not even when she won the Half Mile, last term. The fire was fearfully close now, not more than the length of the big class-room away. The crackling was tremendously loud and the heat was simply scorching. It was dreadful, too, in other ways, for numbers of birds were flying along, half blinded by smoke, and crying and twittering, poor little things. There were rabbits, too, dashing along, and a fox—not a bit frightened of Sydney, because he was so much more frightened of the flames.

Sydney didn't notice this much at the time, as she raced along; she only remembered it afterwards. After five minutes or so, she found she had gained a bit—and you can imagine that was a comfort!

"I'll get away all right," she thought. "And what a splendid adventure it will be to talk about afterwards!"

Sydney ought to have touched wood when she said that. The very next second, her foot caught in a gorse-root and she fell down, headlong. She tried to scramble up at once, of course—and then

she found she couldn't. Her ankle had been twisted badly, and she simply could not stand on it.

Then Sydney saw that it was going to be a much more terrible adventure than she had expected. She began to crawl along as fast as she could, dragging her foot behind her, but, at the best of times, it is not easy to crawl along in gorse and heather—and this was the worst of times!

Every minute the fire was coming nearer, simply eating up the moor. In ten minutes, at most, it *must* catch up with Sydney, and then—well, I needn't waste time in telling you what that "then" meant. You can imagine it for yourselves.

Sydney certainly isn't either stupid or a coward, but it is not easy to think or to make plans when you are expecting to be burnt in a few minutes, like martyrs or Joan of Arc. That's why I call Sydney rather wonderful, although she doesn't know I'm saying that in the story.

She remembered an old book she'd read years before, a book of Mayne Reid's, which was called *The Scalp Hunters*, I think. Its about Red Indians and trappers, and how one of them, called Rube, escaped from a prairie fire. I daresay you haven't read the book, so I will tell you that it was by getting inside the skin of a dead buffalo.

Of course, there were not any dead buffalos about on Exmoor; but, all the same, it gave Sydney an idea. She set off crawling, as fast as she could, not straight ahead now, but rather sideways. And she wondered whether she would be able to get to the place she wanted in time. . . .

Of course, you will guess that she did; otherwise she would not have been able to tell me this story. It was not very far, though it seemed miles and miles.

It was a deepish pit which had been dug in the moor sometime or other, for gravel or something. It was quite bare inside, and for a bit round the edge—just sand and stones. Sydney reached one side of the pit, only a little while before the fire reached the other. Just *how* she scrambled down, she can't quite remember; a good deal of the way she was simply rolling and sliding, until she landed at last, at the bottom, on a heap of sand.

Then, as she says, the fire came to the edge of the pit and looked over at her. . . . It was an awful moment. There was such a roaring and crackling that Sydney could scarcely hear herself think. The heat was frightful and she felt her face and hands blistering and her hair scorching—she could smell it too; but there was nothing to be done, so Sydney just lay at the bottom of the pit, and hid her face in her arms, as much as she could and waited—and waited.

save that of seeking for such odd little native details about which English girls will like to be informed.

"Shut-your-eyes" games seem to occur in all lands. As a rule, the children of the nomad Arabs are sedate small people, not much given to romps and roguery. There is, though, one game known to be played by the girls of several tribes, and believed to be called "Caravan." Parallel lines are drawn on the sand about three yards apart, just beyond one of which squats the "guesser." "Shut-your-eyes" directs the "player," and, seeing that they are shut, proceeds to put down a straight row of date-stones between the two lines. That done, she steps close to the guesser and gives permission "open your eyes." Saying that, the player begins to count out loud and probably up to five, which brief limit reached, the player claps her hands over the eyes of the guesser.

During the short period that has thus been allowed for inspection, the guesser has to make up her mind how many date-stones there are in the row, which decision she at once announces. If she is right in her guess, nothing happens. It more often occurs that she is wrong. Whereupon she pays over to the player as many date-stones as constitute the difference. It will be recognised that once either girl begins to lose, her defeat becomes quickly more and more certain. For she soon has so few date-stones that their number in the line can be ascertained at a glance. That is where lies the chief excitement of the game. Each girl becomes player and guesser in turn. Probably the number of date-stones with which each girl commences is twenty-five. No doubt the name of "Caravan," by which the game is said to be known, has its origin in the fancied likeness of the line of date-stones to a single file camel train wending its way across the desert.

One of our simplest running games is that which is popular everywhere by the name of "Touch." Small Nigerian girls have a somewhat similar pastime that is in all likelihood called by the native equivalent for "Point."

It is a fact well known to travellers and explorers in many tropical lands, that to point your finger at any one constitutes a grave breach of politeness. Such action, indeed, is considered to be nothing short of a deliberate insult. "Never point at natives" is a golden rule that is carefully insisted upon by way of advice in plenty of books of travel. Taking advantage of the liberty in certain directions that is allowed to youth, children, we know, delight to imitate and to exaggerate the foibles of their elders. In like manner, to do what the elders may not do furnishes the richest fun. Which is why the game of "Point" gives some little black girls so much pleasure.

The players stand in a ring around one of their number and, holding hands, begin to circle slowly. Looking from one to another, the girl in the ring selects one of the other players by pointing at her, and at once turns to run. Instantly the ring breaks up, as the girl pointed at starts to chase the other, who, if caught, has to again stand within the ring. If not caught, her unsuccessful pursuer has to take her place. The girls like best to go round and round forming the ring, the while they sing a kind of jeering chorus.

It has been observed that, as a general rule, native girls only play games when quite young. The reason for this is that, with most uncivilised or semi-civilised peoples, a great deal of hard work is done by the women. So soon as a girl commences to grow up, plenty of jobs are promptly found for her to do, and she has no more time for daily fun and make-believe. To this, though, there are happily a number of exceptions, as, notably, with the pleasure-loving people of the isles of palm and spice that are dotted throughout Oceania. There, games are played, and quite childish games at that, by the grown-up women. If, indeed, women who play children's games can be said ever to be grown-up. And, of course, even with the hardest-working tribes of very Darkest Africa, the girls have "jinks" amongst themselves on highdays and holidays.

"Playing at shops" or "going marketing" is every little girl's game in this country. It flourishes also in some parts of Central Africa, those being districts in which there is a perpetual demand for beads as ornaments. With beads when considered as articles of attire, as with dress materials and styles of dress, fashion constantly changes, even in Africa. One year red beads will be in favour, to be succeeded the year after by orange beads, which, after a comparatively short lapse of time, will in turn give place to blue beads. When beads of a particular colour are "out of fashion" they are absolutely worthless, and are often given to the little girls to play with till they are lost. That is the time when the pretence of "going to market" is in full swing. The little girls make mud stalls in imitation of the real market-place; "stock" consists of leaves and twigs and berries, and bits of broken pottery and old rags. And the "money" that is the chief inducement to the playing of the game, is the red or the orange beads that have been ousted from favour by the blue beads.

Another amusement that is greatly appreciated by the little girls of many tribes throughout Africa is that of threading beads. Wooden beads are made by the natives themselves. But for these the young ladies in question care but little. Such beads are too clumsy and are of unattractive colour and appearance. It is the "unfashionable"

Girls' Games in Many Lands

glass beads as aforesaid that take the young people's eye, and there is one game with these that is constantly being played from dawn till bed-time. Several little girls who are lucky enough to possess each a string of beads, meet together and squat down in a circle. Each child then takes her own beads, and, breaking the string, allows the beads to run off the string on to the ground. One by one the beads are then picked up and re-strung. Whereupon this rather peculiar game is ready to start all over again. As they thread the beads, the little girls talk about them, mentioning how valuable they are, how beautiful is their colour, and how swiftly the work of re-stringing them is proceeding.

In certain of the Polynesian islands, the girls are fond of having contests amongst themselves to see who can the most deftly pick up articles with the toes. Remarkable dexterity is displayed at this. Considerable surprise was at one time expressed when it was found that the missionaries were by no means in favour of this game, which was indeed prohibited at some of the missions. Knowledge of the reason for the ban showed that the missionaries' displeasure was well founded. It seemed that up to a comparatively short time ago, the adult inhabitants of these identical islands were infamous for their cleverness at lifting things with their feet, like monkeys. For they used their ability in order to purloin from boats, over the side of which, while pretending to offer some object for sale, they stepped backwards holding a stolen article by their toes. Rightly, the missionaries considered the game that was called "hand foot" to be hardly a discreet one for little girls who could claim such parentage.

Speaking generally, it may be taken that the Chinese are kind to animals, which pleasing trait is likewise revealed by most of their children. As reported by a lady missionary, there is a game played by Chinese girls that is called something like "My mother has only two legs." It is certainly a peculiar title, but the choice of it is not bereft of reason. For, to play the game, a puppy or a kitten has to be procured, and each child in turn goes through the make-believe of curing it of some ailment or other. The imaginary sufferer may be supposed to have broken a leg, to be racked with toothache, or perhaps to be simply starving. In the last-named event, the victim of these operations is regaled to repletion on tit-bits procured from the kitchen. No doubt the game is often terminated by the headlong flight of the bewildered small quadruped thus seriously threatened with being "doctored to death."

Chinese children are not only very fond of toys; they are really clever at making for themselves some of these playthings. Poorer

children often model dolls in yellow clay ; from split cane they also form their own bowling-hoops. A simple toy which quite small girls sometimes contrive, is a whistle roughly made from a section of bamboo, tied to the end of a string and whirled rapidly round and round. This produces an alarming species of shriek which is the joy of troops of small girls who scamper about thus provided.

Pretending to give presents appears to be a variety of amusement making strong appeal to the small maidens of not a few countries. There is about it an alluring air of "when I grow up and am rich," that furnishes what is probably its chief fascination. A traveller in Siam came across a party of youngsters so employed. Seven of them sat on the ground, facing this way and that, and evidently striving to appear as if totally unaware as to what business was on hand. The eighth small girl, walking with mincing steps and her nose well in the air, was passing in and out amongst them, simulating a lady of quality who was on her way to call upon a friend. In her hands she bore a broken basin, picked up from a rubbish heap, and now masquerading as a most valuable gift of some kind or other.

When the lady of quality had at last made her choice, she stopped before one of her friends and with due ceremony made the presentation. Whereupon, and according to the prescribed rules of the game, the other half-dozen also called to pay visits, and were all extravagantly overcome at sight of the magnificent gift that had been presented to their hostess. This game goes by a name that when translated may be taken as meaning "Gracious ladies," and its playing is usually prompted by the finding of any such suitable "present" that has been thrown away in the street.

Building castles is juvenile playtime occupation wherever there is sand. Sadly reminiscent of times of famine, though, a writer mentions having seen on the seashore of India, near Madras, little girls pleasing themselves by building in sand not castles but miniatures of extensive grain stores. Competitions amongst children for models of any kind constructed in sand, have, by the way, been long known in China. There, however, the "superior" boys in times past never deigned to pit their skill against that possessed by the "meaner brained" girls. For the latter, at holiday times when these contests were held, poor little consolation prizes were offered by way of solace. Now there is much more equality between boys and girls, and the latter have many more amusements than of yore.

Luckily for themselves, Eskimo children are to be ranked amongst the happiest youngsters in the world. Every Eskimo man and woman fairly dotes on children, and he and she is never better pleased than

when something is being contrived for the entertainment of the little ones. These dwellers in the North, though, are busy people. Their lives are one long struggle against cold and hunger. From morning till night, the women-folk are employed in making fur garments and boots for the entire family, with intervals in between for preparing and cooking the food that is wanted in such considerable quantity. To gain the furs and the food, the man must be always hunting on land; or else, to get sealskin and seal meat, and whale flesh and narwhal oil, he goes hunting on the sea, varied by spells of fishing. Being so much occupied, the elders have scant leisure for actually playing games with the children, who, being immature imitations of their parents, and consequently young persons of considerable resource, are very well able to look after their own affairs and arrange amusements for themselves.

"The favourite amusement of the Eskimo child," says one writer, "is undoubtedly eating." In that preference the girls yield no precedence to the boys. While the latter are out on the ice enjoying themselves in training the Eskimo dog puppies to become haulers, or are indulging in dog-whip cracking contests, the little girls arrange an artful campaign of their own. At dinner-time each day, cooking is carried on in practically every tent or hut in the settlement. Like house-to-house canvassers, then, these fur-swathed tots divide themselves into small parties and make a round of all the kitchens. The visit being so well timed, its reward is fairly sure. Some steaming hot morsel of meat is popped into the upturned mouth, very likely with the voiced reservation (not unkindly meant): "There you are, young Oolanit," or whatever is the little food-collector's name, "though I know you are not hungry. Your mother has got a fine pot of deer meat, so don't you come round here again for a week." Young Oolanit cheerfully nods a promise, which she faithfully keeps. But she sends little Kensuit and Mameloo instead, and herself goes on a different round. And they all know that if they can but contrive to time this game for just when the pot boils, they will never be refused.

Out-doors on the ice, Eskimo girls have a game that may be said to be a Polarised version of our own "follow my leader." Only there, the premier position in the moving line is occupied by an Eskimo dog puppy, which the first girl chases, and all the others follow in her footsteps. A prominent feature of this game, as of most others that are indulged in by Eskimo girls or boys, is that while engaged in it you all the while shout as loudly as you can. The more noise the merrier, is evidently the motto of these lively ones. "Their voices keep them warm," is what the fond Eskimo mothers will tell you. And

these hard-working women have also the rather wise belief that when a child is noisy it is out of mischief. "What naughtiness can your little Oolanit be doing?" one woman will ask of another. "She is so quiet."

Some of the tribes of Eskimo are still in reality savages. But, unlike most savages, all Eskimo are fond of home life and of simple social pleasures shared in common. In the time of the long Arctic night, the families take it in turn to visit each other's snow houses, which then become packed to what we should consider suffocation with residents and guests. Games are played by the elders with, literally, piles of children looking on. For the space is so restricted that the youngsters have to be actually heaped upon each other. Lit by a smoking lamp, the heat in the one small apartment of the house becomes great. Then the company, young and grown-up, begins to shed one or two articles of outer clothing, which is a sure sign that all are feeling cosy and comfortable.

Ere long, roles are reversed, and in their turn the small spectators become players at the games. Tests of skill with small blunt bone spears arouse much enthusiasm amongst the little girls, whose efforts are greatly applauded by parents and friends. The Eskimo loves a joke. And when our three-foot-high acquaintance, little Oolanit, has made an extra good shot at the tiny bone target that has a hole in the middle of it, her delighted father is pretty certain to say that he is sure she will grow up to become a great hunter, which pronouncement is equally sure to elicit shrieks of amused contradiction from the boys.

From the frozen Pole it is a long but genial jump to the sunny clime of the West Indies, where the warmth of the sun's rays induces all manner of water sports in those energetic enough to undertake them. For the most part, the adult natives are first-rate swimmers and divers, which accomplishments are duly passed on to the girls and boys, and that very early in their career.

Plunging competitions go on all day long amongst the girls, what time many of the boys are very likely diving for money tossed overboard by the travellers on the passenger ships that touch there. The girls, also, amongst themselves dive after a coin, which they seek to snatch before it has time to reach the bottom. Not a few of these little girls are afloat in queer home-made craft of various weird patterns, made out of old sugar or soap boxes. Of the water these children never seem to tire; they will sport in it from dawn till dusk.

When certain contingents returned to the West Indies from the war, they brought with them the innovation of playing in the water with a floating football attached to a long string. To the children this

seemed a simply glorious game. When the soldiers were demobilised or went on elsewhere, the footballs, not a little the worse for wear, were distributed amongst the juvenile swimming population. And the daily programme of the girls then was to swim to sea with the football on a line, all the others chasing the bobbing sphere as it escaped hither and thither after the swimmer. For you cannot dive when you are towing a floating football.

In most countries the model yacht or other craft is usually a toy of the boys. Amongst the fisher folk of Zanzibar, however, the girls display a strong tendency of like sort. Like their brothers, they are the possessors of model canoes, some of them quite elaborate and of good size, which they sail in the pools left by the tide. In our own country it is not at all an everyday experience to find girls evincing much interest in model yacht-racing. Zanzibar, then, shows the world a different example. And her youthful model yachswomen with their toy sea-going canoes, would be welcome visitors to what has been described as being the Mecca of all model yacht enthusiasts, namely, the Round Pond, Kensington Gardens.

One of the best known books written concerning that part of the world, contains the melancholy statement that "the Congo is a toyless country." Where a country is toyless, we may be fairly certain that its youthful inhabitants do not lead particularly gay and happy lives. That, though, is the state of the Congo.

Strangely enough, however, if the girls of the Congo have no dolls or skipping ropes or other similar playthings, they actually do play a kind of golf. The sport is indulged in with a wooden stick and ball. Though there is no prescribed course, as we know it, the game takes the players over a goodly tract of ground, any number being able to join in. The dusky golf girl of the Congo is a budding woman athlete of whom we would willingly hear more.

As we are unfortunately aware, the best part of Africa is still a Dark Continent as regards the enlightenment of the people. Throughout the major portion of that land, a firm belief exists in the mockery that we know by the name of witchcraft. There, however, the weaver of magic spells is more often reckoned to be a man. And very extensively throughout Central, Eastern and Western Africa, girls are afraid to go out after dark for fear of wizards. The wizard, being such a dreadful person, dare not penetrate into the honest home. But he will wait about outside after dark, and if he sees you, and calls your name, you are bound to follow him.

That is the sort of story that makes little African girls tremble at night time. In the light of morning, however, their fears are much

allayed. And so they even venture to play at a game that bears some resemblance to our "Blind Man's Buff," and is actually based on the supposed "calling powers" of the wizard. A bandage is put over the eyes of one girl, around whom the others then circle as silently as possible. One by one they approach her more closely, and whisper her name in her ear. Guided by the sound, it is then the endeavour of the blindfolded player to catch any of the others.

"Grasshopper races" is the name of a diversion that will be unfamiliar to most readers. It is a game that is played by the copper-hued little Redskin girls living on the Indian reservations of North America. The contestants in these affairs are the little girls themselves, not the grasshoppers, though those insects are caused to take active part in the proceedings. In reality, the event is a foot race, in which maybe a dozen girls take part. But each girl carries resting on her open hand a live grasshopper, and she is allowed to proceed towards the goal at any pace she likes so long as the grasshopper remains on her hand. The moment the insect jumps off, the girl who has been carrying it is out of the race, to the huge joy of the spectators.

As may be imagined, a good deal of fun is to be derived from a "grasshopper race." Sometimes a daring competitor, trusting to chance that the insect will not budge, darts along at good speed and wins. More likely though, directly the insect feels the rush of wind, off it goes in a hop to the ground. Usually there is some girl whose motto apparently is slow and sure. At little more than a walk, and heedless of the faster ones, she progresses evenly, her chief intention being not to jolt or jar the sprightly insect, which may remain where it is. Or at any instant, and at its own caprice, it may project itself into space and thus rob its bearer of the fruits of her strategy.

Although Chinese girls whose parents are well-to-do have doll's houses, such imitations of the dwelling-places of grown-ups are not common amongst the nations of the world. For which reason all the more interest attaches to the toy encampments that form the principal, and perhaps only, playthings of the little maidens of some of the Indian tribes on the Yukon. These consist of tiny tents made of skins and fashioned in the exact form of the veritable wigwams. Like the originals, they are supported on poles, and are sometimes of sufficient size to allow at least one of the players at this game of trailing to squat carefully inside them. The game as played is provided by seeking out a suitable site for the camp, putting up the tents, collecting firewood and maybe lighting small fires, pretending to cook the food, and look after the babies. These last are represented by small bundles

of rags, carried about in birch-bark cradles. Sometimes these queer little toy encampments have been purchased from their owners and exhibited in museums.

This subject of the playtime games that beguile the leisure hours of girls all over the world is one that is practically inexhaustible. The only difficulty in the way of ample treatment is that so many travellers who write books on the topic of their experiences are in too much of a hurry to observe the girls quietly at play. Many of the games fail to flourish save in the encouraging environment of home life. And it is the real home life of the people that anxious explorers and travellers, always "on the trot," so frequently fail to see.

Particularly perhaps in British Central Africa, some of the games played by little girls and boys are quite difficult and involved. There are evidently all sorts of rules to be observed, causing all kinds of additions to or subtractions from numbers of sticks and stones held hidden in the hands, placed upon the ground, or dropped into holes in the earth. But these regulations, with which the tiniest native girls seem delightfully familiar, prove so complicated to Britishers and other white folk that to this day we don't know how those games are played. The little black girls know, and in their play hours turn their information to full account.

From what has been here written, you will have gathered that girls' games offer plenty of food for serious thought. These pastimes and their players, indeed, when properly regarded, furnish us with clues to the mind-workings of those who will some day be the grown women of the world.

"The Deep That Coucheth Under"

A Tale of the War in Syria

BY ALFRED COLBECK

I

THE girl reclined, listening, at the bottom of the crevice. The light filtered through the silvery greenness of the olives, fell upon her slender form, and revealed the intent expression of her pallid face; the crevice, however, was a mere slit, and she could creep no nearer to the vertical opening in the limestone cliff twenty feet away. Seventy feet above her the slit widened a little and framed a strip of clear blue sky. Occasionally she turned her eyes upon the strip, and searched the length of it, inward to its closing point, and outward to the angle of the light on the face of the cliff; but, for the most part, she lay still, her eyes withdrawn, absorbed, listening. For the crevice caught faintly, and transmitted to the taut drum of her ear, the musical drone of an aeroplane high up in the Syrian sky.

Twice, oppressed by her imprisonment, longing to exchange if only for a moment the still and stagnant underground air for the fresh and moving air of the hills, and longing, too, for a brief view of the sweet sun-bathed world outside, she had climbed that seventy feet perilously, and more perilously descended once. The second time, like a frightened fawn, she had fled fleetly, and found welcome cover again, through a safer opening, ere the soldiers who had sighted, and were then pursuing, her, could gain their prey. She had not ventured on the perilous climb a third time, for other lives were at stake as well as her own—many others; therefore she had remained underground, ministering to their needs and waiting despondently with them for the long delayed deliverance.

Was this passing aeroplane a sign that the day was drawing nearer? She hoped so, and listened. Perhaps it would cross the crevice. She lifted her eyes again. And, at that moment, the droning changed to an ominous rattle, and then suddenly ceased. She listened still, and watched as she listened, straining in the silence to catch a recurrence

of the sound. A full unbroken minute passed; alarmed, fearing a disaster, she dropped into the darkness from the ledge where she had been reclining, and, familiar with all the twists and turns of the labyrinth, and accustomed to the gloom, she ran for the safer opening down which she had escaped.

Voices all about her cried out; shadowy figures turned to watch her flitting by; but she heeded neither, and left both behind as she rapidly mounted the first stone stairway. Her heart was beating fast with the combined exertion and excitement. Bounding across a narrow chamber, she ran up another stairway, and along a connecting corridor to yet another, mounted that, and entered a bell-shaped cavity with an opening twelve feet above her. A grey light fell through the opening, not directly, but deflected by two outcropping blocks of limestone that leaned against each other, like a V inverted, and formed a natural roof. A rough wooden ladder lay across the floor of the cavity.

She seized the ladder, reared it against the inner rim of the orifice, climbed the rungs, and, obtaining a firm grip of the outer edge, kicked the ladder away and pulled herself through.

The narrower opening at the eastern end of the inclined limestone blocks revealed the upper part of a long slope covered with withered yellow grass. Towards the top, a quarter of a mile away, a fire was burning fiercely; the extended wings of an aeroplane, one of them broken and bent upwards, were well alight; red-fezzed soldiers were rapidly converging upon the blazing mass from three different points; and, between her and the fire, where the ground was clear, two men in dull blue uniforms were racing at high speed, evidently making for the outcrop as the only available place that would give protection and help them to sell their lives dearly.

They were more than half-way to this selected place of defence before the Turks saw them. Three started in pursuit. Revolver in hand, half turning, the man in the rear fired, and one of the Turks dropped in his tracks. The leading man ran on. A second time, half turning, although he lost ground by it, the rear man fired. Another pursuer pitched upon his face, and, clutching frantically at the withered grass and the yielding air, rolled over and over down the slope. The third pursuer halted. Startled by the shots, the ring around the blazing aeroplane wavered and broke. Four others took up the pursuit; the man who had halted joined in. Instead of running in a bunch, however, they spread out fan-wise, hoping, doubtless, that, disconcerted, if he fired again, he would miss, and that they could then close in for the capture. The girl, who, unseen, had witnessed all this, turned, and

crawled to the wider western opening, passed through it, and stood beside it, nervously awaiting the approach of the men.

The leading man rounded the lower end of the rocks. Amazed at the unexpected sight of the girl he pulled up abruptly. To prevent an outcry she placed her finger on her lips. Then a sigh escaped her as his comrade rushed after him, stopped, and jerked himself erect, amazed also, and beset by a sudden fear that the girl would be an embarrassment. For he anticipated a final fight under the cover of the rocks.

She beckoned them gravely and passed again within the opening. Recovering first from his amazement, the second man—the man who had fired the shots—sprang past his fellow and instantly followed her. Midway beneath the shelter she dropped upon her knees. To the two men, following and watching, the orifice, shadowed by the leaning monoliths, was invisible. She stretched her arms across it and gripped the further rim, drew herself forward until her feet fell into it, then her whole body except the clinging hands. Swinging for a moment by her tense white finger-tips, she let go and disappeared underground. The man who was now first peered in and saw her face uplifted to the light. Once more she beckoned, smiling; he dropped swiftly and fell in a heap, and his comrade came down on the top of him.

So far not a word had been spoken. The men, instinctively aware that silence was necessary, bit off their ejaculations, and grinned noiselessly, as they regained their feet. The girl stood like a grey ghost a few feet away.

Leaning toward them, she whispered, "Join hands, please!" at the same time holding out her own; then, in explanation, "There are steps here, and others lower down, all uneven and slippery; and it is very dark. Be careful!"

And again, the second man, the man who had fired the shots, was before his fellow. While she was yet speaking his hand was in hers. Her face, as he had seen it uplifted to the orifice, had awakened within him a slumbering recollection. And now her voice sounded in his ears like the low echo of a voice out of the past. He could neither fix the one nor definitely recall the other. And he could not question her. The one and only thing to do was to take her hand. With his other hand he gripped his fellow's. Linked together in this way they went slowly down into the darkness until they entered a wider space. They felt it was wider; they could not see; but the darkness was not quite so dense as that they had passed through. And, immediately on their entrance, whispering voices filled the cavity, and moving shadows ringed them in.

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The girl dropped upon the ground and sat cross-legged, a shadow in the midst of the shadows, flung out her arms in impetuous remonstrance, and addressed them peremptorily in a tongue unknown to the two men. The voices were instantly stilled, and the shadows dissolved in the darkness and melted completely away.

"What are you?" exclaimed the man who had just released her hand. "A magician?"

And, with a rippling laugh, the girl said, "No! Nothing so romantic. I'm only a schoolmistress. They are my pupils, and, like other children, rude without meaning it, and consumed by curiosity. Please excuse them. Never before in all the three years we have been here have we received visitors like you."

"But could they see us?" queried the other man.

And his comrade, under his breath, repeated wonderingly, "All the three years!"

"Sufficiently well to know that you are strangers from the outside," she replied. "Many of the children have developed quite an abnormal vision. They can see in the dark. But, alas! some of the older folk," she added sadly, "cannot see at all."

"Then, there are older folk?" continued the other man.

"Scores of them, both men and women, in the caves to the right and left of us. They visit us occasionally. They are fugitives like ourselves. But you are different. And the children detected it. I ran by them, speechless, a little while ago, on my way to the surface. Some of them may possibly have run after me. It would be like them to do it. But, if so, they returned, and waited until I brought you down."

"But—Alice—three—years!" and his comrade paused breathlessly between the words.

"Yes, Jack," and, stretching out her hand, she caressed his coat sleeve, "—it is three years since we left Haifa, and—and—seven since I saw you last. I knew you when you ran round the rocks. But I thought you hadn't recognised me."

"I hadn't," confessed Jack.

"Until just now?" she went on.

"Until just now," he assented, taking up her own words. "My memory cleared——"

"Like a photographic plate," his comrade put in.

"Partly," acknowledged Jack, with a nod; then, turning to Alice, "your face, your voice, the clasp of your hand, the ripple of your laughter, the way you flung your arms out, the playful simulation of a commanding tone when you addressed the children in that outlandish tongue——"

“Oh! But I was serious,” she protested, interposing.

“All,” he continued, “combined to clear away the film from my memory.”

“Like a photographic plate,” his comrade persisted, adding, “in a previously prepared solution.”

“Well, if you will have it so,” conceded Jack. “Every man to his trade. You’re the photographer, Ned. I’m only a pilot. And it started that way. For,” and he turned again to Alice, “when I looked down the hole into which you had dropped, and saw your face below, smiling, and uplifted to the light——”

“Like a face seen through the lens of a camera,” said Ned.

“Exactly,” Jack went on, “—my brain caught the impression, which I had neither time nor opportunity to develop, that I had seen you before. The impression deepened with your whisper and—and—all else that followed, until recognition came, almost unconsciously——”

And Ned said, “The solution was at work.”

“In the moment that I spake your name,” concluded Jack.

“Come,” said she, rising, and offering her hand again to guide them. Ned, who might have taken her hand first, readily yielded precedence to his fellow. And, as they passed along, she said, “You must be hungry, and in need of rest. I will take you farther in. Your room will be private. No one will disturb you. Our *menu* is restricted cheese, and dates, and black bread, with water to drink, or, if you prefer it, *leben*. The only bed we can offer you is a heap of dried anemones.”

“That sounds inviting without the *only*,” observed Ned.

“Yes,” seconded Jack. “The *only*’s apologetic, and a bed of dried anemones seems to me to need no apology. It ought to be soft and fragrant, and, so far as I am concerned, it will certainly be unique.”

“And I, too,” said Ned. “I have heard people sing of ‘flowery beds of ease,’ but I’ve never yet been lucky enough to sleep on one.”

“You’d better reserve your opinion until you’ve tried it,” counselled Alice. “Up these steps, please—now, this is your room.”

Their eyes were sealed to its size. But they felt that the space was less than that of the cave they had come from. And the air was very still.

“I’ll fetch a lamp for you,” said she. “Oh! yes,” as they began to remonstrate, “we can afford you one tiny lamp. You cannot see your food without it, or where your bed is. I’ll be back in a moment.” And, indeed, it was scarcely more before she reappeared, holding the lamp in one hand and shielding the flickering flame with the other.

The shielding hand threw the light upon her face. And it was that they looked at first, not the room—an attenuated face, small, pale, piquant, the eyes unusually large, with a gleam of humour in them, and showing in the lamp-light darker than they really were. Jack guessed at once that the attenuation was due to the lack of food, and the paleness to detention for so long a time in the underground gloom. And, considering these, and the natural change in the seven years from the middle 'teens to the early twenties, he did not wonder, that, at the sudden encounter as he ran round the rocks, or looking down upon her faintly illumined face through the orifice, he failed instantly to recall her to mind.

“The lamp is an ancient one, as you will see, made of earthenware,” she explained, “with the wick protruding from the spout,” and she held it toward them on her open palm.

“It's like an invalid's drinking cup,” said Ned.

“Yes,” she assented, and added, “with little in it, and the little very precious. The oil may last you two hours. We economise in light. When you've had—supper, shall we call it?—pinch the wick. I'll put it on this ledge. There! We can talk in the dark. For, after supper, I would like you to tell me how you came down.”

“In the 'bus?” queried Jack.

“If that's what you call the aeroplane,” she replied.

“And you can tell us why you ran up,” returned Jack.

“Oh! That's soon told,” said she. “I was in the crevice listening. You don't know the crevice. I will show it to you to-morrow. I heard the droning and rattle of the engines. They stopped. So I ran up. That's all.”

“A very bare account,” commented Jack.

“With no trimmings whatever,” added Ned.

“I can supply the trimmings afterwards,” said she, “when you have put the light out. Ah! Here it is—your supper, I mean.” And, following Alice's eyes, they saw a slim child standing motionless as a graven image in the entrance to the cave, with a laden basket poised upon her head, and an earthenware bottle swinging by the neck between her parted fingers. Bare-footed, she had mounted the steps noiselessly. She handed the bottle, then the basket, with a low obeisance, to Alice, and, unable altogether to suppress a glance of shy curiosity, she bowed to the two strangers also, and vanished as quickly and silently as she had come.

“Are you Aladdin's sister?” asked Ned.

And Jack said, “I didn't see you rub the lamp when you put it on the ledge.”

"I gave the order, when I fetched the lamp, for your supper to be brought in," returned Alice, laughing.

"The order has been promptly executed," said Ned.

"I knew it would be," she replied.

"And you still disclaim the magician's title?" put in Jack, as she placed the bottle beside them, and began to spread the contents of the basket on a small linen cloth which she had laid on the floor.

"Absolutely," said she. "Haven't I told you already that I'm only a schoolmistress? It's prosaic, but real. And you'll find the food real. We don't deal in unappetising and evanescent enchantments. I'll give you an hour for the meal, and, when I come again, I'll bring Mr. Shuttleworth with me." At the unexpected mention of this man's name they raised their eyes in surprised inquiry. But, without explaining, she continued, "He doesn't know yet that you are here. And, when I tell him, he will naturally desire to see you, and to hear from you how you—how you—drove the 'bus down to a premature terminus."

"Who is Mr. Shuttleworth?" asked Jack.

But there was no answer. She had slipped away.

II

The excavation they were in—for it was an excavation, and not a natural cave—was bell-shaped, and almost exactly like the one they had first entered, even to the orifice in the centre of the roof. The orifice, however, did not communicate directly with the open air. The intense blackness of the rounded space indicated that it opened into another excavation. It was quite fifteen feet above them, and, without assistance, inaccessible.

Jack called Ned's attention to it, and said, "Is that another way out?"

"It looks like another way in," answered Ned, squinting up at it.

"We must get out," returned Jack, decisively, "and nearer the lines, if that be possible, than where we came in. Except for the rocks we made for, there isn't cover enough for a rat on the long bare slope on the top of which we left the old 'bus burning. Alice said the caves run to the right and the left of us. And there is the crevice she spoke of. Perhaps she can pass us along to some place, eastward or westward, where we can emerge unseen and cautiously make our way back. We must hand in our report to-morrow or Monday."

"Perhaps Mr. Shuttleworth will pass us along," suggested Ned.

"Eh?" queried Jack, sharply; and then, with asperity, as if, for

some unaccountable reason, Ned's repetition of the name had ruffled him, "Who the dickens is Mr. Shuttleworth?"

"We shall see him when he comes," answered Ned, calmly, but with a furtive glance at his companion's face.

"If the lamp's lit," Jack responded grumpily.

"If it isn't," returned Ned, "we'll relight it in honour of the introduction. We must have a look at him."

"Certainly," said Jack, and lapsed into a moody silence.

As they finished the meal, Ned said, "Can you supply the preliminary trimmings?"

"The preliminary what?" asked Jack, forgetful of the reference.

"The preliminary *trimmings*," repeated Ned, with a strong emphasis on the final word. "If you care to tell me, I should be pleased to hear how you and—and—Alice—I suppose I may call her Alice—came to know each other. And, if it will help you, I'll douse the glim."

"It would save the oil," said Jack, "and, evidently, they haven't much to spare. Thanks!" as Ned pinched the light out. Then, after a slight pause, "It isn't a case of how we came to know each other; that is, we have known each other ever since we have known anything at all. We were always part of each other's world. I'm the older by less than a year. Consciousness most likely dawned first upon me, that, outside of me, there was a person of consequence called Alice, who would sometimes obey me, and gratify my whims, and sometimes wouldn't whatever part I played—pleader, or taunter, or tyrant—and I played them all; and I daresay Alice would acknowledge that when consciousness dawned upon her, there I was, within the circle of it, ready to be taken for granted, as she had been taken for granted by me."

"Like a sister and brother?"

"Yes, at first, and as we grew up, almost, but not quite. We were neighbour's children. I was one of a large family of sisters and brothers. She had an elder sister only. Our mothers were life-long friends. And our mothers counted most—not our fathers. They were too busy, each with his own work, to give much attention to us. Mine was a doctor, with a widespread country practice, which entailed long daily absences from home; hers was an expert and practical mining engineer frequently consulted by companies at home and abroad. He went abroad, eventually, to Denver, Colorado, when mining began to decline at home, and the family followed him. Alice was then sixteen. Letters passed between the mothers, and between her elder sister and two of mine; but the correspondence tapered off, and, after a while, ceased altogether."

"Between Alice and you?"

"I said nothing about a correspondence between Alice and me."

"No! But I inferred it."

"Oh! And what else did you infer?"

"That you inadvertently twisted the trimmings and set them on by the wrong edge."

"Indeed! When?"

"When you answered my question about the likeness to a sister and brother."

"What did I say?"

"That, as you grew up, you were almost like a sister and brother, but not quite."

"Well?"

"It was a likeness with a difference, and the difference was not in the diminution, but in the excess. You were more than a sister and brother."

"Maybe," said Jack musing. "But we were very young."

"So you were," acknowledged Ned. "But she hasn't forgotten you. And you haven't forgotten her."

"No! The mystery is," Jack went on, "how, when the racket began, she was a schoolmistress in Haifa—in Haifa," he repeated, perplexed, "and had to scuttle down here, with her pupils, and the older folk, and——"

"Mr. Shuttleworth," put in Ned.

"Just so—and Mr. Shuttleworth, whoever he may be."

"The schoolmaster perhaps," suggested Ned.

But Jack shook his head, and further emphasised the negative by expelling the breath in a scornful and spasmodic, if scarcely perceptible, grunt through his expanding nostrils. Ned, taking advantage of the darkness, smiled.

"You've left a gap between Denver and Haifa, Jack," said he.

"Wider and deeper than I can fill up," confessed Jack, disconsolately.

"The letters are no use," prompted Ned.

"Not by a—hallo!" he broke off, whispering.

"What is it?" asked Ned.

"Visitors. Re-light the lamp," said he, "while I receive them."

The striking of the match synchronised with the entrance of Alice, and a man several inches taller than either Ned or Jack, and as thin as a rail.

"Mr. Shuttleworth," said Alice.

He blinked his eyes in the kindling lamp-light. Scrutinising Jack's

face first, then Ned's, he offered them in the same order his bony hand in token of a friendly welcome.

"The airmen," continued Alice—an unnecessary explanation due perhaps to the fact that she was slightly perturbed.

"Yes, my dear," said he, "—Jack: this is Jack, and this is Ned," a distinguishing guess that displayed his penetration. "Now that we have seen each other we might dispense with the light," he suggested, and moved, without invitation, toward the couch of dried anemones.

He was a man of fifty or thereabouts, bearded, and already growing grey. His low grave voice had a resonant quality which impressed both the airmen as authoritative and paternal. Jack's unreasonable antipathy dissolved in his presence. He accepted as quite natural the term of endearment he had used in addressing Alice. And, in compliance with the suggestion, Jack extinguished the light.

"Alice has told me," he went on, when they were settled in the darkness, Jack and Ned together, and Alice, unseen, nestling close beside Mr. Shuttleworth, "how she brought you down. We are not unduly inquisitive. And we have no desire to pry into any military secrets. But perhaps you will tell us what occasioned your premature descent and the destruction of your machine."

"Engine trouble," said Jack.

And Ned added, "The gnome developed insanity."

"The gnome?" queried Mr. Shuttleworth, perplexed by Ned's addition.

"That's the name of the engine," explained Jack. "We had plenty of petrol. We could have reached the lines easily. But the gnome went mad, as Ned says, and began to play the kettledrum; and there was nothing else for it—we had to descend."

"Yes?" said Mr. Shuttleworth, filling up the pause.

"I stopped the engine; and, seeing the slope beneath us, free, as I thought, I planed down, only to find, when we were fifty feet from the ground, that the enemy was waiting for us and prepared to close in upon our landing. Ned wrapped his films up and thrust them, with his observation papers, into his inner breast-pocket; and, as the skids struck the ground, jumped out and ran. We landed heavily; the 'bus was damaged by the impact; the stays snapped and bent the right wing upwards. I struck the tank twice on the rim of a bulge with a big spanner and set the petrol free. A moment served to fire it. Then I ran, helter-skelter, after Ned. And the rest you know."

"Most of it," acknowledged Mr. Shuttleworth.

"We must report ourselves," said Ned, "and pass in the films and the papers."

“When?” asked Mr. Shuttleworth.

“As soon as we can,” returned Ned.

“Alice says that there are caves to the right and the left of us, Mr. Shuttleworth,” said Jack. “We are facing south now, aren’t we?” and he hesitated, reflectively.

“Due south,” Mr. Shuttleworth assured him.

“Then, if we go to the right,” said Jack, “we shall enter into the recesses of the Carmel promontory. Is there an outlet?”

“Several,” replied Mr. Shuttleworth. “But I should advise you to go to the left.”

“Why?”

“Because that will be safer and it will lead you nearer the lines.”

“East by south?”

“At first; then due south, in the direction we are facing.”

“Are the caves connected with each other, Mr. Shuttleworth?”

“Not all the way. There are many breaks. But they extend beyond the lines.”

“What? Beyond the lines?” questioned Ned, incredulously. “Do you know where the lines are, Mr. Shuttleworth?”

“I should say,” returned Mr. Shuttleworth, in slow and calculating tones, “that they rest upon the sea twenty miles away, and bend backwards at rather a sharp angle to a gorge in the hills thirty miles away. Beyond the gorge they are lost to view except in glimpses on the billowy hill-tops between the plain and the Jordan Valley.”

“And this subterranean labyrinth,” said Ned, astounded, and still incredulous, “runs thirty miles, Mr. Shuttleworth—*thirty miles*?”

“And more,” repeated Mr. Shuttleworth. “With breaks. But the breaks are negotiable.”

“W—e—ll!” exclaimed Ned, drawing in his breath deeply.

“I hope it may be,” responded Mr. Shuttleworth. “It has been, so far, for both of you, thanks to Alice’s intervention. Now it’s my turn.”

“Yours?” asked Jack, uncomprehending.

“If you’ll allow me to act as guide,” said he. “And interpreter. I don’t know all the caves. No one knows them all. But the country I do know. And I know the fugitives, and they know me. They’ll help. But not if you went alone. They’re sensitive, secretive, suspicious. And not without reason. Alone they’d baffle you if the caves didn’t. With me they’ll show us the way.”

“When shall we start?” asked Jack eagerly.

“Any time you like,” answered Mr. Shuttleworth. “But, seeing that strength is necessary for the journey, and alertness, when we are

in the open ; and that, with less fear of detection, you could enter the lines in the darkness rather than in the light ; I should advise you to rest awhile, and, if you can, to sleep. We can start early in the morning."

"What do you say, Ned?" asked Jack.

And Ned concurred. "It's sound advice," said he.

"Then, I'll be here two hours before the dawn," said Mr. Shuttleworth, rising, and, at the same time, Alice rose and was about to pass out with him.

"Alice!" and there was a surprised and poignant appeal in Jack's call.

She stood still in the darkness while Mr. Shuttleworth went on.

"You're not going?" he pleaded.

"I'll see you in the morning, Jack, and you too, Ned."

"But——" remonstrated Jack, now by her side, and with his arm around her.

She removed his arm, gently, but firmly, and yet not before he had felt her form trembling against his own. "You must rest," said she.

"You haven't shown us the crevice," returned Jack, recalling, and catching at, her promise, as an excuse for detaining her.

"Oh! the crevice. Yes! I said I'd show it you to-morrow. But you'll be gone. Still, if you care to see it—you and Ned—now, I'll show it you. It's after sunset. The crevice will be dim. And all you will see will be a strip of purple sky, and, perhaps, a star."

Ned noticed that she had linked his name with Jack's twice, and, as he thought, designedly. He had no particular desire to see the crevice. But he did wish to help Jack. He feared, however, that, if he pleaded an excuse, it might appear ungracious, and would probably be so transparent that she would see through it. So, approaching them, he said, diplomatically, "You can show us the star."

"Perhaps," she repeated.

Threading her way unerringly through the excavations, she climbed up to the ledge, and leaned against the opposite side of the crevice. "There it is!" said she, the doubt dissipated, as, with outstretched arm, she pointed to the lamp-like luminary beyond the angle of the rift.

"Yes, I see it," answered Jack, who had mounted beside her.

"Can you see it, Ned?" she asked.

There was no reply. Ned had silently withdrawn.

"He'll be lost," said she, agitated, and pressing against Jack in her eagerness to descend.

"No, dear," returned Jack, with his arm again around her. "You may trust him to find his way back."

“Help me down, Jack,” she panted, “—please—and——”

Jack released her, and dropped instantly to the level of the connecting corridor. She grasped his uplifted hands, and sprang lightly down.

“It was a trick,” said she, angrily.

“A trick, Alice? What? To leave us alone? I was no party to it. And where’s the harm? It’s no trick. He may have slipped away out of consideration for us. Don’t do him an injustice.”

“I’m sorely sensitive, Jack, and a bit overwrought,” she replied, penitently. “Forgive me!”

“My dear!” said he, in a tone so caressing that she felt sure he loved her still.

With steadier nerves she awaited the ordeal.

“You were in Denver when I heard from you last.”

“A last which you never answered, Jack.”

“But you heard about me.”

“It was not the same.”

“No! I suppose not. I was busy, and to blame.”

“Not to blame, Jack. I, too, was busy. You will remember that I took a medical course. Then I went in for teaching. A vacancy occurred in the Haifa mission staff. I offered myself, and was accepted. That was four years ago. And, when the war conditions became acute in these parts, and the children, as well as we, were no longer safe in Haifa, we sent the children, in small companies, secretly, into these underground refuges, and followed them ourselves.”

“Who?”

“We—the members of the staff.”

“And Mr. Shuttleworth?”

“He’s the chief of the staff—the Principal.”

“Was he here when you came, Alice?”

“Yes! He had been here several years.”

“He’s a good fellow.”

“And clever, Jack; devoted to the mission, and familiar with the country. He superintended the transfer of all connected with the mission. It was no easy task. He exposed himself to grave danger, scouting, investigating, preparing the way for us; and he brought us, undetected, unintercepted, and without a single mishap, into the shelter of these ancient caves.”

“It was a fine bit of work,” acknowledged Jack.

“And here, but for him, we might all have perished,” Alice went on, “if not by slaughter, by famine. We never lacked water. There are subterranean streams all along the hills, and, in the lower caves, a

few pools. Food has been scarce, and at times we have been on very short rations, but he has always contrived to have sufficient smuggled in to meet, at any rate, our barest wants."

"I don't wonder now," said Jack, "at his sporting proposal."

"Sporting?" queried Alice, alarmed, and with some trepidation. She had not only misinterpreted the word, but misapplied it, forgetting, for a moment, that she had not yet made her important disclosure.

"Yes—the proposal to Ned and me, that, if we liked, he would act as guide and interpreter as far as the British lines."

Alice caught her breath, and said, "You call it sporting, Jack?"

And Jack replied, "Yes, because of the risk. And, Alice, dear," he proceeded, "before we go—and this may be my only opportunity—I want to make quite sure of you."

"In what way, Jack?"

"We were sweethearts, dear."

"We were children," she replied, whispering.

"You have the same old place in my heart, Alice, now that we are no longer children," said he. "I offer you a love matured and with a clearer apprehension of what the offer means."

"You are too late, Jack," she responded, sadly.

"Too late?" repeated Jack, bewildered.

"I cannot listen to you, Jack. I must not. It would be unfair to him, more than unfair—treacherous. No! Don't touch me. Don't kiss me. I dare not yield. I'm engaged to Mr. Shuttleworth. Here's the entrance to your room. Go! Jack—go—and—and—God be with you!"

Jack's arms were out, feeling for her, but she had fled. He stood alone, dazed, unable fully to comprehend the words she had spoken; and, as his brain cleared, he stumbled up the steps, crossed the bell-shaped cavity, and dropped upon the dried anemones with a heavy heart. Ned was already fast asleep.

III

Ned was still asleep when Mr. Shuttleworth came.

Jack, however, had not slept at all. He had kept his eyes wide open, staring into the darkness, recalling all that had occurred since Alice had befriended them and brought them down: unwilling to part with her, and yet obliged to acquiesce in what seemed to be a preposterous engagement. Mr. Shuttleworth was old enough to be her father. He had excellent qualities, doubtless; he was capable, resourceful, courageous, and a man of attractive personality; but he

was too old for Alice, and—well—in his opinion, not quite the kind of man, that, under normal circumstances, Alice would have chosen. How had the engagement come about? Probably, thought Jack, through their intimate co-operation in the rescue of the children, and, afterwards, in their prolonged incessant and mutual attention to the needs of the numerous refugees.

Resentment surged within his heart, and rose so high at times as to swamp discrimination; he felt that fate had dealt harshly with him; he was inclined to identify fate with Mr. Shuttleworth. The rising resentment became personal; but it sank again, and he acknowledged that a personal resentment was foolish and unjust. When the engagement took place Mr. Shuttleworth might not have known of his existence. At the sound of Mr. Shuttleworth's footsteps, and his resonant voice bidding them a cheerful "Good morning!" Jack's resentment ebbed away.

Yawning, Ned rubbed his eyes, then sprang suddenly into a sitting posture, and almost instinctively thrust his hand into his inner breast-pocket.

"Is it time to go?" he asked, satisfied when he found the photographs and papers still there.

"If you're ready," responded Mr. Shuttleworth.

"I'm always ready," answered Ned, "when I'm awake.—Jack!"

"I'm here, Ned, and ready, too."

"I didn't hear you. This confounded darkness——"

"I'll light the lamp," said Mr. Shuttleworth, calmly. Jack watched him. Ned lifted his eyes to Jack's face. He saw at once that Jack was in trouble. And Mr. Shuttleworth continued when the lamp was alight: "I have brought provisions with me for the day. Will you carry your own portions?" and he handed them on, one parcel to Jack, the other to Ned. "You have your revolvers? That's right. Only, don't use them unless you are in a very tight corner. Use these. They are silent and dreaded more," and he produced a couple of short blades, sheathed, and easy to carry. "They are pointed and two-edged—you'll find them reliable." And, in reply to the interrogation in their eyes, he said, "Yes—mine is here," and he showed them a weapon exactly similar. "I bought them in Damascus some years ago." A length of cord was looped within his hand. Their eyes dropped toward it, and he said, explaining, "We must keep in touch with each other. The cord will be serviceable. Shall we start?" And he glanced around the cavity preparatory to pinching out the light.

"Is Alice awake?" asked Ned.

Jack stood tense and still awaiting the reply.

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"I don't know," said Mr. Shuttleworth. "Did you expect her?"

"I did," returned Ned.

"And you, Jack—did you?" asked Mr. Shuttleworth.

"No!" said Jack.

Then Ned, stepping forward, said, "Pinch the light out, Mr. Shuttleworth. We'll go."

The light was extinguished. A loose end of the loop was passed back to Ned, and farther back to Jack. Mr. Shuttleworth led the way.

None of the three knew that Alice, on the far side of the great cavern, where the first corridor opened eastward, crouched in the darkness, and listened, trembling, to their slowly retreating footsteps, until, losing them in the distance, her head dropped upon her folded arms, and her tears, brimming to the overflow, fell to the ground.

For two hours they travelled on, almost without a word, through several series of natural caves, connected by hewn corridors, and interspersed with bell-shaped excavations, rising and falling to various levels; all silent except for a deep breath taken, or the soft sound of a body turning over, or a slight moan, or the uncanny outcry of a sleeper oppressed by an evil dream. They left behind them these evidences of the peopled darkness as they climbed three stairways in succession and entered a cracked cavity—the crack running into a rift up the side of the hill. Through the stems of the low-growing bushes, which, for the most part, concealed the rift, the faint light of the dawn sifted and fell upon their eyes like balm.

"We must venture into the open," said Mr. Shuttleworth, subduing his voice to a whisper, and gathering in the cord.

"Are we far from the next set of caves?" asked Ned.

"A quarter of a mile," he replied, coiling the cord and tying it, before he passed it into Ned's keeping. "There's very little cover. The ground rises in rough terraces, many of them badly broken. We have crossed the depression that connects the Carmel ridge with the central hills. We turn southwards now. I'll be back in half an hour—if——" he added, quietly, but significantly; and, placing his foot within a niche, he prepared to thrust his shoulders sideways into the crack.

"Are we to stay here?" asked Jack.

"For half an hour," said he, "then, if I shouldn't come back, shift for yourselves."

They watched him squeeze into the crack, creep along the rift, part the interlacing stems at the upper end, and disappear.

"If he shouldn't come back——" whispered Jack.

And Ned said, "We shall have lost a friend."

"We shall," said Jack. "And Alice will have lost more than a friend."

"Oh! When did you discover that, Jack?"

"I didn't discover it. I was too dense. She had to tell me."

"Gently, I hope?"

"No! In desperation."

Ned was silent for a while, and then, glancing sympathetically at Jack's troubled face, he said, because he could think of nothing better to say, "I'm sorry."

Within the half-hour, the interlacing stems were parted at the lower end, where the rift joined up with the crack in the cavity, and Mr. Shuttleworth dropped through.

"There are troops on the heights," said he, "but, if we go warily, we can avoid detection and gain the entrance. Come along!"

He leaned over, and gave his hand first to Jack, then to Ned, and helped them both within the crack.

"Keep close behind me," he counselled, and began instantly to creep up the rift.

Presently, where the rift narrowed, he cautiously raised himself, pushed the stems aside, and looked about him. Satisfied with the survey he forced his way through. Jack followed, and found him, clear of the bushes and lying flat upon the ground. He, too, hugged the ground and drew himself forward. Ned copied their example. They were stretched out on a low bare terrace. To their left was the damaged retaining wall of the terrace above them. To their right the retaining wall of the lower terrace had almost crumbled away. They were in shadow. A level mist covered all the plain and curled in upon the slope as if it were the margin of an atmospheric sea. The uneven lines of the rising terraces, and the rounded hill-top, projected beyond the shadow, and were sharply defined in the pearly clearness of the dawn.

A gun boomed ahead of them. It was evidently the signal for the firing of the artillery in the plain. Spear-like flames split the mist; screaming projectiles rent it; and the thunderous roll of the discharges set the echoes humming in the hills. Heavier explosions reached their ears from the ironclads at sea. And the guns from the oblique British lines joined in. The night must have been quiet, they supposed; for the reverberation of the guns had not disturbed them underground. But the day was opening in lively fashion. And Mr. Shuttleworth

welcomed it. The attention of the Turks would be diverted. They might cross the terraces unseen perhaps, and slip into the gap that would admit them once more to the shelter of the caves.

Mr. Shuttleworth, leading, and closely followed by Jack and Ned, crept into the deeper shadow, and along it to a break in the retaining wall. They scrambled up the break without undue exposure to the terrace above. In this way, always taking advantage of the breaks and the shadow, they climbed terrace after terrace, making for a gorge southward; but, as they mounted, the shadow shrunk, and, before they entered the gorge, the sun topped the hills.

A challenge rang through the echoes when they were well within the gorge.

Mr. Shuttleworth stopped instantly.

"Don't move," he whispered.

A minute passed, and the challenge rang out again.

"He's somewhere opposite," said Mr. Shuttleworth. "We must run for it. The gap is just ahead of us. Are you ready?" And, without waiting for an answer, he said "Now!" half rose, and ran, swerved, and disappeared.

Jack and Ned, close upon his heels, attempting the swerve, fell—Ned over Jack. A rifle cracked, and a bullet chipped the edge of the gap. Mr. Shuttleworth drew Ned farther in, and, at the same time, set him on his feet. Jack jumped up without assistance.

"We cannot linger," said Mr. Shuttleworth. "He's too good a shot."

"Yes!" responded Ned. "A bull's eye would pierce the three of us."

And, indeed, the gap was very narrow, and it contracted yet more as they pressed in, until they had to squeeze through it sideways. They emerged into a wider space. The flooring of this wider space dipped towards an opening in the centre. Without delay, and apparently without precaution, Mr. Shuttleworth slid through the opening, and, hearing the pad of his feet as he landed, Ned and Jack instantly followed him. They were again in one of the now familiar bell-shaped cavities.

"He may investigate," said Mr. Shuttleworth. "We shall be safer lower down." He took the cord from Ned, untied it, passed the end of it back to Ned and Jack, and, stooping beneath an archway excavated in the rim of the bell, descended by an uneven stairway into the deeper darkness below.

They were far down before Mr. Shuttleworth halted. The sound of the guns was muffled by the intervening rocks. No audible indica-

tion had yet reached them that this series of chambers was inhabited. And the darkness was so dense that they might have been stone-blind.

"How about breakfast?" suggested Mr. Shuttleworth.

"It's time we had it," said Ned.

"Then, we'll rest here," said Mr. Shuttleworth, "and see what the parcels contain."

"Feel and taste," corrected Ned. "We cannot see."

"Alice put them up for us," Mr. Shuttleworth informed them.

"That over-rides all deficiencies," returned Ned.

Jack was silent.

Mr. Shuttleworth drew the cord in until they were close beside him. They sat down together with their backs against the wall.

While they were eating, Ned said, "Who dug these places out?"

"Ah!" returned Mr. Shuttleworth, "that's a poser. We can only guess. The Canaanites began them probably, the people who were here before the Hebrew conquest, and before the immigration of the Philistines; and they were doubtless added to by the successive dwellers on the soil as the pressure of marauding hordes, or the march of despoiling armies, demanded. We are near the desert, the home of the marauders; and we are on the edge of the highway of the old eastern world."

"So they dug them out as shelters?" pursued Ned.

"Not exclusively," replied Mr. Shuttleworth, "and perhaps not as shelters at all in the first instance. Their shape——"

"I was going to ask about that," interposed Ned.

And Mr. Shuttleworth went on, "—shows that they were excavated as granaries. They hid their corn. They had to. Afterwards, when the need arose, they used them as places of refuge."

Jack was apathetic. He took no part in the conversation. But, as they finished the meal, he broke in upon it, suddenly, by exclaiming, "There are lights in the corridor."

And, on the instant, the darkness dissolved in erratic flickerings, and weird shadows danced before their eyes. They all three sprang to their feet. Glancing along the corridor, they saw in the distance four or five torches, aflame, but streaming with smoke, and beneath them a company of old men, bearded, bare-armed and bare-legged, and clad scantily in garments that were rent and hanging from their bony bodies in shreds and rags.

"Canaanites revived," said Ned.

"Refugees" said Mr. Shuttleworth curtly. Hollowing his hands, he hailed them, in a tongue unknown to Ned and Jack.

His greeting quickened their pace. They came on confidently,

gathered garrulously about the three, frequently interrupted Mr. Shuttleworth's explanations, and turned again to conduct them, not only along the corridor, but forward through a complicated series of excavations. There, aided by the torches, the travellers saw hundreds of men and women, inert, dejected, silent, staring vacantly at them, some with sightless eyes, as they went slowly by. A few, however, augmented the procession, and pestered the torch-bearers persistently with their wondering inquiries, until, halting at the foot of a stairway, Mr. Shuttleworth dismissed them all. Alone, and in the darkness, the three began their ascent again toward the open air.

"The man I walked beside," said Mr. Shuttleworth, "will meet me on my return."

"With the illuminations?" questioned Ned.

"I hope not," responded Mr. Shuttleworth, with a grimace, and a dissenting shrug of the shoulders, which they could not see. "I can dispense with the illuminations."

"To take you back through the caves?" Ned continued.

"And farther," said Mr. Shuttleworth, "—all the way. Three of his grandchildren were being educated at the mission school. One died after we entered the caves. The other two are living—a boy and a girl. They lost their mother before the war. A Turk captured their father. The authorities put him to the torture in order to extract from him a disclosure of our hiding-place—for they knew that his children were with us—and, failing in their purpose, they ordered the man who had captured him to shoot him. The girl is one of Alice's pupils. And—yes, I remember now—Alice told me—she brought your supper in."

"That girl?" questioned Jack, interested.

"Yes," replied Mr. Shuttleworth, and repeated, with an emendation, "one of Alice's most promising pupils."

Ned's interest was in Mr. Shuttleworth's repetition of Alice's name as well as in the identity of her pupil. It seemed to him that Mr. Shuttleworth had mentioned Alice designedly several times; why, he knew not, unless it was to probe Jack, and find out what his feelings were and how he regarded the engagement. If that were the explanation, then, so far as Ned could see, Mr. Shuttleworth had not been very successful. Ned reflected upon it, but made no remark about it; and Jack relapsed into his customary silence.

It was a long climb to the surface. And, as they approached the top, they became aware of the increased intensity of the gun-fire. They were quite near the Turkish lines. Still led by Mr. Shuttleworth, who knew the country like the palm of his hand, they gained the next

opening, descended, and passed beneath the Turkish lines, ascended again, and re-entered another series. This proved to be a much extended, and, for them, a final series. The excavations were almost deserted. They rested in one of the lower caves. Jack and Ned finished their food. Mr. Shuttleworth, mindful of his return, reserved a part of his. They emerged into the open in the evening dusk. Except for an occasional and desultory outburst, the artillery duel had ceased. Directly before them, a quarter of a mile away, were the British lines.

Ned nodded toward them, and, turning to Mr. Shuttleworth, said, “There’s safety for you as well as for us.”

“Would you have me go?” he asked.

And Ned, ashamed of the suggestion, said “No!”

“Would *you* have me go?” he repeated, addressing Jack.

Jack said, “No!” too. “You’re a brave man, Mr. Shuttleworth, and loyal, not to what you think to be safe, but to what you know to be right. Your duty is not there,” and Jack pointed to the British lines; then, half turning, and flinging his arm back, “Your duty is yonder, with the children, and the old people, and your school staff, and—and——” he hesitated, for it cost him a pang to say it “—and with Alice.”

“Thank you, Jack,” the other replied, simply, but looking him straight in the eyes, and placing a hand upon his shoulder.

“We shall meet again when the advance sets in,” said Jack.

And Ned said, “Soon.”

“I will look for you,” returned Mr. Shuttleworth, with a ready smile.

And so they parted.

IV

Less than a fortnight later, General Allenby, in keeping with his carefully matured plans, drove back the western section of the Turkish lines. The cavalry obtained by this manœuvre a chance they had not yet had in any theatre of the war since its commencement. And they made splendid use of it. They rode along the seaboard, and, curving, over the depression between the ridge of Carmel and the central hills, then across the Plain of Esdraelon into Nazareth. There, dividing, and securing the passages above and below the Sea of Galilee, they pressed on to Damascus. Meanwhile, the infantry closed in, net-like, from the seaward plain and from the farther side of the Jordan valley. The Turks were caught. A few, warned of the danger, streamed away before the circle was completed; others, desperately, after the circle

“The Deep That Coucheth Under”

was completed, broke through the meshes, and escaped ; but the bulk were swept up like a great haul out of the sea. It was a strategical masterpiece.

Jack and Ned, who, along with other flying men, creditably contributed to this remarkable victory, obtained a few days' leave of absence after the fall of Damascus.

They naturally supposed that the victory had released the refugees ; and that Alice, and Mr. Shuttleworth, with the members of the staff and the children, would be back in Haifa ; and so they made for Haifa with all speed. But Mr. Shuttleworth and Alice were not there. And the grand-daughter of old Selim was not there.

“Where are they ?” asked Ned.

And one of the members of the staff said, “They are still in the caves.”

“The three of them ?”

“And old Selim also,” replied the teacher.

“Why ?”

“Because Mr. Shuttleworth is not yet well enough to be carried out.”

“Gracious !” exclaimed Ned. “What's amiss with him ? Is he ill ?”

“Not ill exactly, but wounded.”

“Did he venture out before the rush came ?”

“No ! Old Selim brought him in three weeks ago. He was shot in the shoulder by a Turkish sentinel who was watching for him.”

Jack, leaving the inquiries to Ned, had been piecing together these scraps of information.

“We'll go across to the caves,” said he.

And the teacher said, “Can you find them ? If I can guide you——”

“Thank you,” returned Jack, interposing, and declining the offer. “There is no need to trouble you. We know where they are.”

They kept to the northern side of the range, and, after some hours' walking, espied a cliff rent at the top, the rent descending to a complete closure.

“Can that be the crevice ?” asked Jack.

“It may be,” said Ned. “That's about its position.”

“It's a nearer way in,” said Jack.

“Abrupter,” returned Ned. “But, if you mean to try it, I'm willing.”

“We saw the star from there,” continued Jack.

And Ned said, “You, Jack—you and Alice. I didn't.”

"It was a very bright star, Ned, and, seen through the crevice, alone, it hung quite low and lamp-like in the purple sky."

"Venus, perhaps," said Ned. "Isn't Venus just now the early evening star?"

"And Venus disappointed me," said Jack.

"It's a trick she has," responded Ned, "and," breathing hard, for they were now breasting the hill, "you cannot trust her"—again he panted for breath—"until she shows her hand."

They skirted the cliff to reach the summit, and walked across to the fissure, which, though narrow, ran back from the edge of the cliff for forty or fifty yards. They saw at once that, if they could take advantage, wedge-like, of both sides of the fissure, they could get down. Jack went first, and dropped upon the ledge before Ned ventured in. Ned came cautiously after. But, some distance above the ledge, he missed his footing, cried out, and fell. Jack, crouching beneath him, broke his fall. And they laughed loudly at what might have been a disaster.

"You!"

They looked over the ledge, and, in the dimness, beheld a startled face.

"We!"

And Ned, who had spoken, began to blow upon his open hands to cool the hot and smarting abrasions.

Jack, however, who had jumped down—for he had recognised Alice's voice—now stood beside her.

Continuing, Ned said, half reproachfully and in self-exoneration, "He would come this way," and resumed the cooling process without attempting to get down.

"I was close by," said Alice, "and I heard the cry, then the laughter, and wondered what they meant. So I ran on to see."

"And here we were," responded Ned, suspending operations to answer her.

"But that does not explain them," she protested.

"No!" said Ned, again suspending operations. "You missed the explanation. It was an acrobatic feat. I nearly achieved a summer-sault. It was only the narrowness of the crevice that prevented me. And it forced out of me a spontaneous yell. Jack was underneath. He heard the yell, and knew that I was coming. So he bent his back to receive me. That set us laughing."

"After the reception?" queried Alice, with a merry gleam in her eyes.

And Ned added, "When we had recovered our breath."

“And the surplus,” returned Alice, mischievously.

“And the surplus?” repeated Ned, perplexed; then, comprehending, “Oh! for my hands. Yes! The crevice was too narrow.”

“How is Mr. Shuttleworth?” Jack broke in.

Alice turned to him a graver face. “Much better, Jack. He’s expecting you. He said you would come. I was afraid he would die. But he didn’t; he said he would live. Even in his delirium he said he would live. And he said much besides in his delirium. I cannot remind him of it now. And I was thankful that Selim, the old man, and his grandchild, my pupil, who are both with me, did not understand him.”

“Then, fever followed the wounding, Alice?” said Jack.

She nodded affirmatively, and said, “So you know of the wounding?”

“Not how it occurred,” returned Jack. “We heard of it in Haifa, and that you were here, and Selim, and the child. We heard; too, that he was shot by a Turkish sentinel who was on the look-out for him, and that Selim carried him in—nothing more. How did it occur?”

“He shall tell you,” replied Alice. “Will you come? He’s lying in the chamber you occupied—you and Ned.”

Ned ceased his blowing and instantly jumped down to accompany them.

Mr. Shuttleworth was stretched out on a palliasse sent in from the school. It rested on the dried anemones smoothed out for the purpose. A couple of pillows supported his head. Three lamps were burning in the chamber. It was not a very brilliant illumination, but sufficient to reveal the patient’s pallid face, and the bandages deftly drawn about the injured shoulder.

“We no longer economise in light,” said Alice.

Mr. Shuttleworth smiled.

“You’re better?” queried Jack.

“Nearly well, my boy,” he answered, and the smile deepened as he held out his free hand, first to Jack then to Ned. “I’ve been waiting for you. I said I would.”

“In pain, unfortunately,” said Jack, touched by the way he had addressed him.

“Oh! that’s nothing,” he replied. “My nurse—the best of nurses——” and he turned his head to smile gratefully at Alice, “gave me such skilful and assiduous attention that the pain didn’t count. I lost my bearings a bit, and said things I cannot remember now—foolish things, perhaps, that I hope she’ll forget. I know she’ll forgive.”

The blood rushed to Alice’s neck, and cheeks, and brow.

"Who shot you?" asked Jack, fixing his eyes on the bandages.

"The same man who fired at us when we entered the gap," said he.

"And chipped the stone away," added Ned, eagerly. "He's too true a marksman to trifle with."

"Was, not is," said Mr. Shuttleworth. "He's fired his last shot. Selim finished him."

Selim lifted his head at the mention of his name.

The slight movement caused Jack and Ned to look round. And there, dimly, in the deeper shadows of the bell-shaped curve on the other side of the chamber, they saw Selim squatted beside his grand-daughter. They both rose in acknowledgment of the discovery, bowed profoundly to Jack and Ned, and dropped again almost out of sight.

"He was on the look-out for you," prompted Jack, after this brief interlude.

"Yes! He had crossed the gorge," said Mr. Shuttleworth. "He may have squeezed through the gap and found the entrance to the caves. Anyhow, he was suspicious, and watched for our return—yours, doubtless, as well as mine. We saw him, Selim and I, as we drew ourselves out of the opening. He was standing on the terrace, a little distance away, blurred in the darkness, but clear enough to show us that he was facing the gap. Possibly he had heard us as we scrambled out. He may have wondered what the noise was. He probably stood waiting for our emergence and ready to fire. We could not consult each other. The least whisper would have betrayed us. So we had to act on what we surmised to be in each other's mind. Silent, motionless, unseen, although we could see him, we waited for him to step aside or to turn away. And, at last, his suspicion allayed, he resumed—I suppose he resumed—his pacing to and fro along the terrace.

"We could hear his footsteps. We could see him as he passed and re-passed. The increasing darkness deepened his image to a shadow. He went to the limits of the terrace on either side. The time came when, directly he had passed on his way to the farther side, we entered the narrower part of the gap, dashed out before he turned, and ran. He heard us, and ran after us. Wherever possible we availed ourselves of the shelter of the terraces, running beneath them, only leaping from one to the other when we were forced to it, and so came to the rift in the ground covered by the straggling bushes.

"I thought we were safe—that the erratic descent and the denser darkness had baffled him. But, no! He fired, just as Selim dropped into the rift. The shot took me in the shoulder. I fell prone on my face on the edge of the rift and lay quite still.

"Whispering into Selim's ear, I said, 'We have no fire-arms. He

knows it. He'll presume upon it. Take my knife, and stay where you are, concealed, and wait for him. He'll follow us up. He'll want to know the result of the shot. Wait for him, and, when the chance comes, strike, and strike hard.' I was exhausted. The breath was whistling in my throat. I could say no more.

"I was not mistaken. He came on, cautiously, dropping down the two terraces he had yet to negotiate, and slowly approached me. I didn't move. But I couldn't quite suppress the whistling. He leaned over me to ascertain where the wound was, and whether it was likely to prove fatal—prepared, I fancy, to finish me, if it were not. It was too dark for him to see clearly. He struck a match; the light flared up; and Selim saw his face. It was the face of the man who had captured, and, after the torture, killed his son!

"While he yet leaned over me, with the match flickering in his fingers, Selim struck, and struck hard, between his neck and shoulder. The knife clove its way down deep into his heart. He groaned, and jerked himself forward spasmodically across the rift. I freed myself, and, with Selim's help, dropped beneath the stems, and straightway fainted.

"Selim had saved my life, and probably his own; and he had avenged the death of his son."

"And what next?" asked Jack, breathlessly.

"I don't know," confessed Mr. Shuttleworth. "I suppose he must have carried me down the stairways—a heavy task—and, summoning the refugees, and enlisting their assistance, forward through the caves until—until—Alice took charge of me. For, after the long faint, the next recollection I have is a sight of Alice's face. Then that faded. The fever ran riot within me, and produced fantastic hallucinations, and lured me into expressions, that, in my sane moments, I might not have used; and, when my brain cleared, I discovered that Alice was still there, that beneath my bandaged shoulder there was a gnawing pain, and that I was as weak, and almost as helpless, as a little child."

"Did he perforate you?" asked Ned.

"No! The bullet was deflected by my shoulder-blade, and lodged in my neck, near the wind-pipe. The whistling was caused by a lateral pressure on the wind-pipe, and not by the perforation of the lung. Alice located the bullet, and coaxed it out.—What did I say, Alice?"

"When the bullet fell out?"

"No! In my delirium."

Reddening again, Alice replied, "You were not responsible for what you said." Then, remembering a phrase he had frequently used that seemed to be without connection—a singular phrase that she had

failed to understand, and willing to humour him, she went on, innocently, “You spoke about the deep that coucheth under.”

“Did I? It was in my mind before I fainted,” said he, “and has often been in my mind since. I have found out its meaning, not the meaning intended when first it was pronounced as a blessing upon the man, who, long ages ago, was lowered into one of these caves, and drawn up, and sold by his disaffected brethren to a company of Midianitish merchantmen who were on their way down to Egypt—for this is Dothan—but a meaning applicable, Alice, to you—to you and Jack. The blessing is yours, Alice—yours and Jack’s. You love each other. Yes, dear, don’t speak,” for Alice, dismayed, was about to break in. “Our engagement is at an end. I cannot hold you to it. I would not if I could. I recognise in your love and his ‘the deep that coucheth under,’ and, since first I was aware of it, I have tested it, quietly, in many ways. Mine—mine—well, I’ll only say this about it—you’ll never lose your place in my heart.”

Before their leave was over, Jack and Ned, with Alice’s help, and the assistance of Selim and his grand-daughter, carried Mr. Shuttleworth up the stairways, and drew him through the opening beneath the leaning monoliths. A litter was waiting to bear him back to Haifa. And, in Haifa, the following summer, when Alice and Jack rose from their knees, the vows exchanged, and the marriage prayer over, he stood beside them, smiling, and said, “The ever springing happiness out of the deep that coucheth under be always yours!”

NOTE.—The following extract from a communication by Dr. Bliss to the Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund for July, 1920, may be of interest to the readers of this story—“The same region (between Haifa and Lydd) is honeycombed with hundreds of bell-shaped underground chambers, cut from the chalky soil, forming sometimes a complicated series, capable of holding thousands of refugees, and in my view actually used for this purpose. With indefatigable zeal Professor Macalister has already explored many of these huge chambers, climbing down the sometimes balustraded stairways, only to find at the bottom an opening into a lower excavation. But an indefinite number still await exploration.”—A.C.

A Frock for Cinderella

Brenda's Unexpected Stroke of Luck

BY ETHEL TALBOT

"OH dear! Oh dear!" sobbed Brenda.

She didn't often cry, for she was thirteen. Girls of thirteen usually scorn tears. Brenda was as brave as any other girl at St. Albans, but to-night she had forgotten everything except the fact that she'd got to cry; and cry she must.

"Oh! oh! It's a shame. Oh, I am unlucky! Oh, botheration! I wish I could stop, but I can't. Oh, I must, MUST stop before Aunt Grace comes home to see! OH! OH! OH! What a stupid I am; but I can't help it."

Poor old Brenda. For she really felt too miserable for words.

It was all on account of an envelope clutched in her watery hand. It was on account of the fact that the envelope held a card. Just a plain piece of cardboard, but it was printed in golden lettering. And it invited Miss Brenda Sinclair to appear at a Party that very night.

It was the very first party to which she'd ever been invited. And, now that she had at last got the invitation, she couldn't go! And the reason that she couldn't go was perfectly simple, although most girls would find it hard to believe. Brenda hadn't got one single party frock!

The reason of that was that she lived with old Aunt Grace at Number Eleven Hart Road, and old Aunt Grace didn't seem to think that party frocks were necessary things at all. Nor had they been until to-night. This, as I said before, was the first party invitation that Brenda had ever received. For she had had no friends of her own age until just three months ago, when old Aunt Grace had decided that she must go to day-school.

Until that wonderful day Brenda had learned questions and answers out of Dr. Brewer's *Guide to Knowledge*, in exactly the same way that Aunt Grace had learned them fifty years before. But now—things were different. They were growing different every day. Brenda was a schoolgirl, and a schoolgirl who was busy making friends. She was

learning the jollinesses of pretty frocks and merry-makings. And, all through the holidays, she had been wondering and wondering if, perhaps, one or other of her new school friends would invite her to a party—just perhaps.

"If someone does," thought Brenda, "then I'll beg Aunt Grace to let Miss Bartlett make me a party frock. I shan't say one word about it until the invitation really comes. For I know that Aunt Grace isn't rich. It's awfully dear and darling of her to let me live with her at all. If I'd got a Mummy and Dad like most other girls, of course I suppose I'd *expect* to have party frocks. But——"

For Brenda was brave. She wasn't a grumbler. Though, all the same, she loved parties and pretty things as well as every one else.

And now her very first invitation had come. And old Aunt Grace was at tea next door, so she hadn't seen it arrive. And Brenda was glad. For the disappointment was too bad to bear unless she might bear it alone. The invitation, you see, was for that very, very night; and Brenda hadn't got one frock that she could wear.

Rat-tat! came at the door just as she was mopping her eyes for the last time with a regular mop of a handkerchief.

"That's Aunt Grace. She never can see the latch-key at night-time. I do hope she won't notice anything about my eyes," thought Brenda, giving one last loud and heroic snuffle as she hastened to the door.

"What did the post bring, my dear?"

"The post, Aunt Grace!" Brenda gave quite a jump. How did the old lady know that it had come! After one reading of the invitation she had thrust it hurriedly behind all the books on her shelf, to be looked at again some time when she could bear it. "The post, Aunt Grace?"

"Yes, my dear. Miss Hopkins, next door, when she took in her own letters, told me that she had seen the man come here, next."

"Oh yes. It was—— Auntie, it was just an—invitation."

Aunt Grace was old. She couldn't see well. But she knew the tones of Brenda's voice. "An invitation? For you?"

"Yes, Aunt Grace. To a party. At the Grahams. Those girls at school whom I was telling you of. For to-night. But, of course——!"

"My dear! The Grahams! Why, I shall be very pleased for you to go! A children's party? To-night? You may get ready at once." The old lady spoke in a fluttery voice.

But here Brenda put down her foot firmly. Aunt Grace was her dearest friend and relation in the world, but—Aunt Grace did not

A Frock for Cinderella

understand. "Auntie," she protested. "No, I can't. Not in my school frock. Oh, how could I? No, I'd rather—far, *far* rather stay at home."

Brenda gave a choke. "If—if the invitation had come a little earlier, I'd have asked whether I might have had—a frock like the other girls at school. I could have helped to make it. But—the party's for to-night. And Aunt Grace, I just couldn't——" Brenda gave a sudden sob.

"Dear! dear!" said the old lady.

"There now!" thought Brenda, staring at herself in the glass and addressing herself as she stared. "You silly hysterical goat, you. You've upset auntie. And she's gone upstairs and she's probably bothering her dear, darling old head about not having bought me a frock like other girls." She shook her fist at herself in the glass and began to whistle as loudly as she could (though whistling is difficult when you've just been crying); hoping that Aunt Grace, who was moving about overhead, would hear the merry sounds and conclude that her great-niece had forgotten her troubles.

But Aunt Grace concluded no such thing. Up in her bedroom the old lady was as unhappy in her own way as was Brenda below. "Dear! dear!" she kept repeating. "Poor child! Dear! dear! Poor child!" She repeated those words so often that they seemed, at last, like a kind of refrain, and perhaps they had a kind of magical effect on the old lady. For it was after the thirteenth repetition of the words that, all of a sudden, without any warning at all, Aunt Grace's grand idea came.

"Why!" said the old lady; "WHY! WHY! WHY!" And she got up from the couch where she had seated herself to think. And with trembling hands, but with a happy light on her old face, she began pulling at the ancient straps of a very ancient trunk below her bed.

"Brenda!" she called over the stairway, when ten minutes more had passed.

"Coming, Aunt Grace!" replied Brenda, now perfectly mistress of herself.

And up the stairs she came, three steps at a time. "Is it hot milk for supper, auntie?" she began, with her face round the corner of the door.

But the words died on her lips at the sight which met her eyes. In front of the bed was a large open trunk. A trunk which had remained locked during her whole lifetime with her aunt. On the bed lay a "something" which at first she did not distinguish; for her complete

attention was given to the excited, happy, almost mischievously delighted look on old Aunt Grace's face.

"My dear, I have—a little surprise for you. A—very pleasant little surprise I hope and think! Come in, Brenda. If you can make very good use of your time, my dear, I think there is no need at all for you to feel disappointed. For—you will be able to go to the Grahams' party after all!"

It was during the slow delivery of this remarkable speech that Brenda's eyes found time to wander from the excited and eager look on Aunt Grace's face, and to rest upon the strange object now lying upon the bed.

It was a—PARTY FROCK!

Yes, indeed. A party frock. But a party frock of fully fifty years ago. Ruffled and tuffed; furbellowed and frilled; made of beautiful materials of antique cut and ancient design. Beautiful in itself, certainly, as a relic of days gone by for aye; but—as a party frock for a thirteen-year-old girl during the year of grace 1922, quite and absolutely impossible. Even Brenda, utterly lacking in everyday knowledge of frocks and frills, knew this.

She gave a gasp. She had no words to utter.

"I am so glad you are pleased, my dear." It was Aunt Grace's voice again. The tone was reminiscent and almost loving as her old fingers touched the old-time frills. "This was *my* party frock. And I only wore it once. It was during my childhood, Brenda, when I was just about your age, that my dear father lost all his money. This was the very last party frock that I wore; for our life grew straitened after that, and we lived simply. But my dear mother packed this dress away. She would not have it parted with. There were tears in her dear eyes, I remember, when she folded it up with lavender and laid it by. She said," Aunt Grace's voice grew low; her old fingers stroked the ancient tucks; "that I had looked a 'sweet flower' in this pretty frock. Perhaps I did; that is fifty years ago! I could not be called vain for remembering that now, I think."

Brenda gave another gasp, with a sob hidden away in it somewhere.

"Aunt Grace——" she began hesitatingly. But the old lady didn't seem to hear her.

"For my dear mother's sake, I think," she went on, "I have never got rid of this dear frock. For the memories it holds, my dear. But to-night, I think—she would have been so pleased for it to be worn again—by another 'little flower.' So, Brenda——" old Aunt Grace looked up smiling. "Try it on, my dear. And if it fits, as I really think it will, there is no need for you to give up your party after all!"

A Frock for Cinderella

"Aunt Grace——" began Brenda; but she couldn't go on. How could she explain things. She couldn't. Perhaps the frock *wouldn't* fit. That was her one chance of escape from the awful predicament that faced her. The prospect of arriving at the Grahams' party dressed in a frock of fifty years ago!

She slipped out of her school frock, and slowly, carefully, she slipped into the party dress which little Aunt Grace had worn. Inwardly she hated it; hated it for its antique shape. But—there was more to the matter than that. With the quivering, faltering touch of Aunt Grace's eager, loving fingers on her neck, as the old lady, herself, hooked the fastenings in anxious haste, Brenda realised that she could not hurt Aunt Grace's heart.

"There!" said the old lady, surveying the vision in the glass. "Brenda—my dear. It is a perfect fit. Another—'little flower!'"

It was then that Brenda won the hardest battle, perhaps, that she had ever fought. "Thank you, Aunt Grace, darling," said Brenda; and she flung both her arms round the old lady's neck. "I *will* go to the party," she said.

But, when she had closed the door of Number Eleven behind her, and was running down the street to where the tramcar started, Brenda's courage oozed out again. How could she do it! Oh, how could she! To go to the Grahams' grand big house with its butler and trim maids; with its well-dressed guests; with its special orchestra; with—— For one moment she had vague ideas of running away for ever. Then she wondered hurriedly whether it would not be possible to hide herself somewhere until it might be considered the correct time for her to return. Then, somehow or other, she managed to poke those feelings behind her. "I WILL go!" she told herself; "I WILL! I promised Aunt Grace. And I'd be—a coward if I didn't. What if they *do* laugh—at me! I'd rather that than that Aunt Grace——"

With the air of a victor—though she didn't know it—she jumped into the waiting tram, and took her seat in the corner.

"Hulloa! Brenda! You going to the Grahams, too?" shouted an eager voice. There was a frou-frou of silks and from the opposite side of the car rustled Mary Sanderson.

"Yes." Brenda's tone was brief.

"So am I! We'll go in together. Oh, what frock are you wearing? I'm——"

Brenda gave no answer. She was summoning up all her reserve force of courage. The trial had begun sooner than she had expected it. "I——" she said.

"Tickets, please——!" The tram conductor stood before them.

With a shaking hand she fumbled under the old-fashioned skirts for her petticoat purse. Mary would see the frock, now, and probably, if she was kind, she wouldn't ask the question again. In her despair Brenda opened her old-fashioned cloak even wider than she need have done to extricate her purse, for she felt that the sooner the worst was known, the better it must be.

"Twopenny ticket, please!" she said with a sort of choke.

Then she heard a gasp from her side. It was Mary, of course.

"Oh, I say——" said Mary. "You——"

"What?" said Brenda in a "don't-care" voice. Mary had seen the worst. Now for the deluge.

"What were you going to say?" asked Brenda coldly.

"I was going to ask what frock you were wearing. But I caught a glimpse when you opened your cloak!" Mary's tone was deferential. Oh, I say, how lucky you are! When the invitation came—at the last moment and fancy dress too!—mother and I simply didn't know what to do. But I've got an old pierrette frock. And I'm wearing that. There are sure to be prizes for the best frock, and I should think you're pretty sure of one, Brenda. That frock is perfectly sweet. What do you call it, by the way?"

Brenda gave one last choke. The tram suddenly seemed like a fairy palace. "Fancy dress!" something in her head seemed to be singing; "Fancy dress! And I was so afraid of reading the invitation card more than once that I tucked it away without realising it. Fancy dress! Fancy dress!"

"Well?" inquired Mary. "What do you call it?"

"A Girl of Fifty Years Ago!" said Brenda in her ordinary tones. But her heart was thumping with joy; her eyes were sparkling with happiness; and her toes were tapping with eagerness as the two girls stepped off the tramcar together and made their way across the roadway to the Grahams' front door.

Exploring in Unknown Africa

**Mrs. Rosita Forbes (the famous Woman-Explorer) tells her
very Interesting Story to**

GEORGE A. WADE

"My journey into the little-known region of the Senussi," said Mrs. Rosita Forbes to me, as we sat talking at her home near Hyde Park Corner, "was not a mere chance affair, or something undertaken on the spur of the moment by a woman in England who desired novelty and adventure.

"I had worked for close on six years somewhere in the East, and had got acquainted with much that attracted me greatly in the daily life and character of the Arabs. I had been out in Syria, and was more or less in touch with the Emir Feisul's particular sphere. Then I went across from Tangier to Cairo, and on to the Red Sea. I traversed on that journey Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripoli, as well as Egypt, and I got closely into touch with Arab life in all its varied forms, and got to know most, if not all, of the head men in the different districts, a thing which proved extremely useful to me afterwards.

"I grew gradually more and more interested, too, in the political situation. For I quickly saw that only something done soon, and effectively, by the British, could prevent or forestall what can only be described as 'Bolshevism' amongst the Arab tribes all over North Africa. And the more I thought of this, the more I understood that an important factor in the situation was the Senussi tribe and its chiefs, far away in the Sahara, in the region known as Kurafa, a town and district scarcely ever trod by Europeans, and probably never before penetrated by a white woman in the manner I later on accomplished.

"The Senussi represented what we may call a question mark, in this matter. No one really knew their strength, their numbers, their country and intelligence. Reports which I heard seemed to me to indicate great possibilities, so I resolved to get into their country if

I could, and see for myself what the prospects and state of things there were.

"It meant a journey through the desert of 500 miles; much planning and working for eighteen months before it could be done; and the testing of various routes, so as to discover the best one for my purpose. But at length I had gathered together the men, camels, equipment, and presents necessary, and was ready to set forth.

"I may say that actual travel in this expedition took me, from start to return, four months. Also, by visiting Kufara in the manner I did, we brought to light many new facts which proved of immense value and use to the British Government afterwards.

"Kufara is the centre of all the chief trade-lines and caravan-routes in that part of Africa. It might well be called 'The Mansion House Crossing' of the Sahara, seeing that the traffic there and the number of great highways (of the 'desert' kind) converging and crossing there, make it more busy and important than any other part of the Sahara. As showing you what difficulties come one's way who sets out on such a journey as this, I may say that often for seven days at a stretch the camels—and of course ourselves—had to go without coming to fresh water. There were no fewer than eighteen camels to be taken with us—no small feat in itself to obtain such a herd and fit them out properly for their work. We had to travel 250 miles on these camels, and were in a tremendous measure dependent on their lasting out and serving us well, so it became a very grave matter for me to know and feel that my men had chosen the animals wisely.

"By the bye, I may mention here that a camel appears to me to count for little in the economic mind of the Arabs. It is not ill-used, I at once concede, but if it gets unwell, or seems to fall off in strength, little trouble is taken by them to cure it, or to set it up again strong as ever. There is a trifle too much 'Kismet' about their treatment of camels to please me altogether, just as there is about so many Arab matters.

"Kismet—Fate—the Will of Allah—this appears to be part and parcel of all Arabian philosophy to a degree that people in England can scarcely imagine. Whatever happens that the Arab does not like, does not desire, or that would give him much time and trouble to change or improve, is set down immediately, and cheerfully in a way, to Kismet. That blessed word is far more frequent and useful to the calm, immovable Arab temperament, than any such word as Mesopotamia was to the old woman in the story we often tell here in our own land.

"I had with me two slave-servants, if I may use that term, Zeenab

and Hauwa. The former was quite a young girl, the latter much older. But both were very useful to me during the journeys, and they proved excellent companions of my own sex too; which was something, indeed, when one otherwise would have only been surrounded by the male sex for so many months, and in such trying circumstances.

"For all travelling in the Sahara desert is trying, even in the best circumstances, once you have got the first enchantment brushed off. There are dust-storms and sand-storms, of which we got plenty at times. I have seen the sun and all sense of direction completely blotted out by sand-storms. I enclosed myself at first in a thick blanket inside my tent when such a storm came, and often would glance through a mere slit in the blanket to watch the black servants, also enveloped, staggering about as they tried to save some of our luggage from being buried by the tremendous drifts of whirling, whizzing sand. But, as a rule, one finds it best to get right into the tent, with every little hole covered and not even a slit in the blanket—so penetrating is the fine sand during such a storm as this.

"Then, the camels, of which I have already spoken somewhat, are often a big trial. One never knows what will happen to them, or if they will even survive at all. And if, on such a journey, the camels all 'peg out' at the wrong time, who shall say what may not happen to the explorer or merchant, however expert or wise? I soon grasped what a chief meant who once asked me a sort of riddle. It was, 'What is Allah's greatest gift to man?'

"Knowing he must be referring to something in his own life and experience, I thought for a moment, and, desiring to stand well in his estimation, answered 'The Koran.' 'No,' he replied, 'It is the camel. For, without the camel, there would be no dates on the desert; no food on it; no travelling over it; no men able to live on or near it; no trade; no life—nothing!'

"I was not long in recognising that he was quite right, too. For a journey such as I took opens one's eyes considerably, and teaches one many lessons never learned in schools or in books. That is the real charm, the delightful result, the splendid value of travel and life amongst other nations and races; one learns that all the world is not contained within one's own village or town; one soon sees that 'There are more things in Heaven and Earth, than are dreamt of in our philosophy.'

"The desert exercises a marvellous effect on those who live there. It develops growth, powers, and character very early. With the Senussi, girls are of marriageable age at nine, and boys at thirteen! Hence it is quite possible that a woman may be a grandmother in Kufara at the

age when an English girl is just thinking of getting married—and deemed by us not at all too tardy in that great affair of life.

“The Sahara develops, too, fatalism even more, I think, than does the ordinary Arab country. There is by Nature a wondrous calm, a slowness, a sameness, a somnolence, a dignity resting upon all the great hundreds on hundreds of miles of sand, which somehow or other—often almost unconsciously—begins to exert its mystic influence even on Europeans who are brought much, and for long, into close contact with it.

“Time seems not to count at all there. It is little use asking an Arab guide how many *hours* this or that will take. He always says in effect, ‘There are no hours in the desert!’ Should you then ask ‘How many days?’ he will reply that it all depends on one’s own activity and speed—it may take few or many. And, if he is a true son of the Sahara, he rather implies that activity and speed are in themselves fatal qualities to acquire.

“Arab hospitality—as I found it everywhere, but especially at Kufara—is prodigious. And everything set before you is of the best. But if you come to the end of a meal within two hours you may regard things as having been hurried up no small amount. I have more than once at a good dinner there had no fewer than eight different courses of cooked lamb set before me, apart from several other courses. And, if you do not wish to hurt your hospitable host’s feelings, you must eat at least a bit of them all.

“I found at Kufara that one had to pay ‘darb,’ or customs-duty, whenever one crossed the oases there with a caravan in going over the desert. It was said that paying duty in this manner protected the caravan against attacks by stray Arab bands, who acknowledged the authority of the chiefs at Kufara all the same. Well, one paid, and paid as cheerfully and smilingly as possible.

“I got a big reputation as a woman-doctor whilst with the Senussi, though how much this was merited I can hardly say with certainty, seeing that I have no diploma. But because some little attentions that I paid to women who were sick proved good, I soon had my tent thronged with women each day, and I was expected to cure all kinds of maladies.

“As the women were all veiled, if young, lest any unhallowed eyes should gaze on them, I had to ‘feel’ their skin-diseases through reams of garments; to prescribe for invisible eye-troubles; and frequently to guess at ailments from more or less vague descriptions brought me by elderly relatives. It is no sinecure having a reputation as a medical woman in those parts, I can assure you.”

"You are glad to be back in England again, Mrs. Forbes?" I asked, after we had talked for some time upon some of my own experiences in North African countries.

"Well, of course I am. But——" and the delightfully young-looking explorer before me, gazed across at me from her couch wistfully as she paused. "You have been in the East, so you know how the Arab lands curiously affect one. Do *you* ever wish, or feel called, to go back there?"

"Every time Spring comes round!" said I. "For it was at that season I went. I seem to know just how the cuckoo and the swallow feel when the call comes to them each year."

"Exactly!" said Mrs. Forbes, smiling, as she handed me her book, and pointed to a passage. "Read that, and you will see how all we who have been there feel alike on this."

I read the following in the concluding page of *The Secret of the Sahara*: "Sometime, somehow, I know not where, nor when, but most assuredly, I shall come back to the deserts, and the strange tracks, and the camels again."

Yes, those who have once been there all feel just like that!

The Guardian of the Shrine

How the "White Lady" Walked at Greyminster

BY MADELEINE MONCRIEFF

THE Cathedral was wrapped in the darkness and hush peculiar to holy places when the last worshipper has long since departed and the last light been extinguished ; when the great doors, securely bolted, have closed upon the busy throngs of this world, and only the silent guests sleeping beneath their massive tombs in some quiet side Chapel remain in the sacred shrine. Then the voices of night are heard, scarcely distinguishable sounds and movements stir the still air—a hollow groan from some deep note of the great organ, a whisper from some curtain swaying at the touch of an almost imperceptible breath of night, the creak of doors and windows answering each other across the vast pillared space—every sound finding its faint reverberation, until the whole building seems peopled by beings from another sphere, whose soft footfalls echo along the dim aisles and whose voices fill the great Church like the whisperings of a summer breeze.

Quietly but insistently a sound from the outside world broke the stillness—a sound ominous and menacing, the cutting of glass with a glazier's diamond and the gentle sawing of lead.

For some time it continued ; then, as the chimes overhead rang out the midnight hour, two men dropped cautiously from a window near the chancel. They were father and son. The father had to his account a long list of burglaries, for some of which he had suffered imprisonment, but he had never before tried his skill upon a Church, and for the moment the vastness of the Cathedral, and its holy hush, overawed him.

He stood irresolute, peering towards the sanctuary, which was faintly illumined by the rays of the moonlight. Upon his son, a weedy-looking youth of scarcely nineteen, the strange surroundings had an almost paralysing effect. Never before had he been his father's sole companion on his nefarious business, and the weird loneliness of the Cathedral, coupled with excitement and apprehension, caused his teeth to chatter and his knees to knock together.

Both men were well acquainted with the legend current in the city, that in the hours of darkness a figure in white draperies and carrying a light haunted the ancient Cathedral Church of Greyminster. It was an old superstition—its origin lost in antiquity,—but there were many who declared that they or their ancestors had seen the “White Lady.” From generation to generation the story had been handed on, losing nothing in the telling, until it had become generally believed that whoever saw the apparition would either fall dead upon the spot or meet with continual misfortune for a number of years.

“Let’s get out o’ this, Guv’nor,” whispered the youth hoarsely, “we don’t want ter see the White Ghost.”

By this time the older man had somewhat recovered his nerve. He lifted the dark lantern and glanced contemptuously at his son’s white face.

“If you’re afeard yer can go home; but ghosts or no ghosts I’m goin’ ter have them vases.”

He turned as he spoke and cautiously led the way towards the communion table, where stood two ornate vases. Both were heavily gilt, exquisite in design and workmanship and of considerable value. They had only recently been presented by the Mayor and Corporation of the city.

Afraid to lose sight of his father the youth followed closely, carrying two large sacks. They passed up through the chancel between the richly carved choir stalls and entered the sanctuary—still on tip-toe, although here a thick carpet completely deadened the sound of their footsteps.

Slowly they mounted the steps, and stood side by side, considering how best to remove the heavy ornaments from their place.

“Hold one o’ the sacks open, Joe,” said the older burglar as he reached forward to seize one of the vases.

Another moment and his unholy hands would have grasped it, but a door creaked and slowly swung back upon its hinges. It was a small door of carved oak exactly matching the panelled wall to the right of the shrine,—a secret door, out of use since the far-off days when a fugitive, fleeing from summary justice, might have sought and found sanctuary in the holy place.

The burglar’s hands fell to his sides, his son dropped the sack, and both watched with starting eyes the entrance of a tall, slight figure, clad in a loose white robe from head to foot. Its head and shoulders were swathed in a filmy substance of purest white, from which looked out a face oval and young. A face beautiful and innocent, framed in hair of a rich dark brown, and with large blue-grey eyes wide open and

fixed intently upon a dim, flickering light carried in an open silver sconce of ancient design.

With outstretched hands the figure moved forward, its filmy draperies falling from its arms like wings and its white-shod feet making no sound upon the carpeted floor. Slowly with a rhythmic, gliding motion, it came onward, and as it approached the men crept away from the holy table and cowered against the wall.

There the youth collapsed, and without a sound fell unconscious at his father's feet; while the older man, breathing hard, never doubting that the legend had been fulfilled and that his son was dead, momentarily expected a like fate to befall himself.

Heedless of the terror-stricken marauders, the apparition reached the foot of the steps, paused for a moment, and then, with a graceful movement, dropped upon its knees in the attitude of prayer, both hands upraised and head reverently bent.

Thus it remained for what to the man gazing upon it seemed an eternity. But at last it raised its head, turned its clear grey eyes upon him and looked unflinchingly into his shifty eyes, its gaze seeming to burn into what little soul was left in him. Fear held him motionless for a second or two, then, with a low howl, he turned and fled. Another minute and he had flung himself through the window by which he had entered, and had fallen helpless among the bushes outside, with several bones broken and no possibility of further escape.

II

The strange happenings of that night were not yet over. Dean Aubrey and his wife, sleeping in their residence adjoining the Cathedral, were awakened by the sound of a light footfall upon the stairs. Noiselessly the Dean opened the door and looked out upon the gallery and staircase where a single gas-jet burned low. He, too, saw a white-robed figure approaching, light in hand. He, too, looked into a pair of calm grey eyes—

"Why! Kathleen!" he exclaimed.

But without a sign of recognition the figure glided past.

"What is it?" inquired his wife, as, throwing a dressing-gown about her, she joined him, just in time to see the apparition vanish into the apartment occupied by a young niece who was spending a few days at the Deanery. Pushing past her husband she ran after the white-clad figure.

"Kathie, are you all right, dear?" she asked.

There was no reply. Unconscious of her aunt's presence, the young

girl set the light upon the table, threw off her Shetland shawl, and climbed into her bed. A few moments after, her even breathing told that she was fast asleep.

Mrs. Aubrey rejoined the Dean—

“Kathleen walks in ~~her~~ sleep,” she said, “I wonder where she has been.”

“I’ll go and have a look round,” he replied.

He did so, and returned with the report that all was well. But the incident troubled his wife. For hours she lay awake, and several times tip-toed to Kathleen’s room, only to find her in a deep slumber. The Dean, complacent and easy-going, saw no need for anxiety, and when he rose at his usual early hour he had almost forgotten the disturbance of the night.

His was the duty of officiating at the seven o’clock service that morning. He strolled across the garden and entered the Cathedral precincts, where an agitated verger met him with the story of an attempted robbery, of the helpless condition of the thieves and their consequent capture.

“Where are they?” inquired the Dean.

“One is in the choir vestry, sir, still unconscious; and the other is in the North Porch, both legs broken. I’ve sent for the police, sir.”

Being in good time Dean Aubrey stepped round to the North Porch and interviewed the older man,—who between his groans gave a graphic description of the “ghost.”

“It was the ‘White Lady’ herself, sir, sure-*ly*. Me son fell down dead on the spot; an’ I’ll never fergit the sight o’ er, not ter me dyin’ day!”

The police arrived, the men were removed, while the Dean conducted the service and returned to his home and breakfast.

Kathleen was presiding over the coffee-pot.

“Good morning, Uncle,” she said brightly. “Auntie’s had rather a disturbed night, she says, and is tired. I’ve persuaded her to have breakfast in bed; so you’ll have to make do with me alone this morning.”

Dean Aubrey laughed.

“I guess we shall manage,” he said. “How have *you* slept, Kathie?”

“Like a top,” she replied. “Oh, but Uncle, I had such a vivid dream about the Cathedral. I dreamt there was some kind of danger and that I fled down the stairway in the wall and took sanctuary in the Cathedral—just like you told me people used to do. I seemed to be kneeling there in prayer for a long while; I was not frightened but I

knew the danger was still about. Then, all of a sudden, that feeling was gone and I knew that everything was all right. Somehow I felt *so* happy and safe ; and I don't remember anything more."

"That was certainly a strange dream, my dear. I suppose it was the result of my taking you down the secret staircase yesterday, and telling you tales of the olden times, eh?"

"Yes, Uncle. I wonder I didn't *walk* in my sleep. I used to when anything had specially interested me, but I don't now."

"That's right," said the Dean, applying himself to his toast.

A twinkle was in his eyes as he thought of the "apparition" which had frustrated the evil designs of the Cathedral thieves. He knew now who was the "White Lady" whose presence had saved the holy place from desecration ; but he discreetly kept his own counsel, and to turn the subject inquired,—

"Would you like a run in the motor to-day, Kathie?"

A Sentimental Puzzle

And the Way to Make It

BY "ADSUM"

ONCE upon a time (this is not a fairy story), a very loving couple were looking at my collection of puzzles. This was really a very pleasant occupation for them, since they both attempted to solve the same puzzle and naturally were brought in very close proximity to each other.

Whether they were actually interested in the puzzle I do not know ; in fact, I am inclined to doubt it, because She (a capital S, please, Mr. Printer,) seemed to look at Him more often than at the little circle of cardboard.

At last one of them asked me to make a puzzle combining their initials. His name was Maurice and hers Violet, and for a long time I could not think of an idea incorporating M and V. In desperation I said to myself a heart with an arrow through it is most suitable for them, and then I had a brain-wave. Here it is.

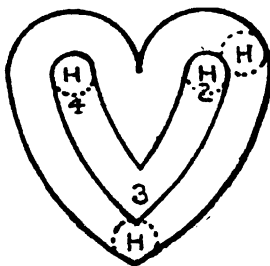


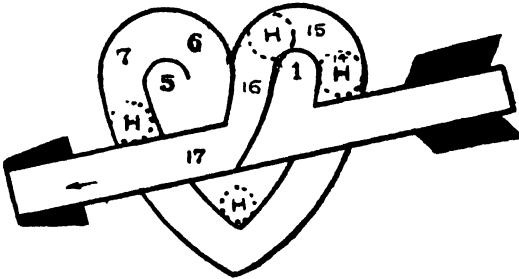
FIGURE 1. UPPER.

The outer circle of the heart forms the letter M, whose "legs" are separated by the hole at the bottom ; and the inner space, divided from M by the wall of paper, forms a fairly good V. Of course, I always flatter myself that I was the means of bringing matters to a successful conclusion. Whether the puzzle helped or not they became engaged the next day, so when you are similarly situated just set to work on this most admirable matchmaker.

It is a very simple puzzle ; nothing elaborate is required, and the only materials necessary for its construction are cardboard, paper, a little piece of sheet celluloid or anything else transparent for the top, and one $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch diameter Steel Ball.

We want three heart-shaped pieces of cardboard, drawn to represent my first three sketches, and in the first two the circles marked "H" are to be cut away with a sharp knife. If you have a set of carpenter's tools a dowel pin will make an excellent job of the holes. The lines of the "V" on each piece are to be formed of strips of paper $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch wide, stuck "edge on" with seccotine.

Carefully bend the paper to correspond with the lines you have drawn, avoiding all sharp creases, and if necessary keep the walls in position with pins until the seccotine has set hard. In the upper layer there is no break in the wall of the V, but in the middle layer,



No. 2, which also holds the arrow, the walls are formed of three pieces.

The lower course has an opening in the V $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch wide, and a barrier is formed from the V to the outside wall just under No. 13 on my sketch (Fig. 3).

While the three hearts are drying we can proceed with the arrow, which is a much easier job than it looks. First of all cut a piece of fairly thick paper, 3 inches wide and 4 inches long. Now find a pencil $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch diameter and roll your piece of paper around it to form a tube 3 inches long. Stick the successive layers well with seccotine, but mind you do not stick the paper to the pencil, or you will never be able to slide the tube off when it is completed.

Let the arrow dry nice and hard before you attempt to take it off, and then cut away one side making a gap half an inch long as shown in Fig. 4. The tube can now be stuck on the middle layer with the gap opening towards the top of the heart, and with the top right-hand piece of the V fixed to the lower side of the tube, as shown in Fig. 2.

A Sentimental Puzzle

This piece should be strongly fixed, or the weight of the ball falling against it will soon break away the barrier and spoil your puzzle.

Now carefully gum the upper edge of your walls and the top of the arrow, and press the upper layer in position. The bottom layer can now be fixed underneath in the same manner, and the half-finished puzzle set aside to dry while we cut strips to form the outer casing.

This casing is going to be the hardest part of the puzzle, because it must not only be strong but must look nice as well. First of all cut two strips of paper 3 inches long. The width is determined by the thickness of your puzzle, and will be three-quarters of an inch plus the thickness of the three layers of cardboard and the sheet of celluloid.

Each piece forms one-half of the heart with an overlap at the bottom, and make a hole large enough to slip over the arrow tube in the centre of each.

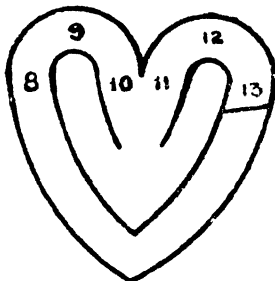


FIGURE 3. LOWER.

Make the edges of the cardboard layers nice and sticky and put one piece on, pushing the top end well into the centre of the M and folding the spare end at the bottom round the other side. The other strip comes next. Slide it over the other end of the tube, and press it round in just the same way as you did the first piece.

Now we only have to add succeeding layers of paper until the puzzle seems fairly stiff. The second layer consists of two more pieces, but laid in a different position. Cut one piece $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long to cover the top of the M, and stick one end against the point end of the arrow. Press the strip round the top of the heart and down in the centre with the back of your knife-blade.

The other end should have a little piece cut away so that the strip lies flat around the protruding arrow. A second strip can now be stuck over the lower portion of the puzzle, and when these are dry cut two more strips exactly like the first two you put on.

The three layers make a very good thickness, and Fig. 5 will show you how to "finish off."

The heart-shaped layer of celluloid will not remain long in position if seccotine only is used, so all around the top edge we must stick a narrow strip, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch wide, pressing half its width over the transparent top.

Now cut a similar strip to reinforce the bottom layer of the puzzle, and we have only to barb and feather our arrow.

Fig. 2 will show you the size and shape of four little pieces of cardboard which are to be stuck to the tube "edge on." Mind you put the "barb" on the left and the "feathers" on the right side, or when you come to put the ball in you will wonder why you cannot solve the puzzle.

The man at the cycle shop will let you have a steel ball, and now I will show you how to work the puzzle. Drop the ball in at the right-hand end of the arrow. By tipping the heart slightly you will be able to see it through hole No. 2 in the top layer. Turn up the puzzle so that the ball comes through to the celluloid, and run it round

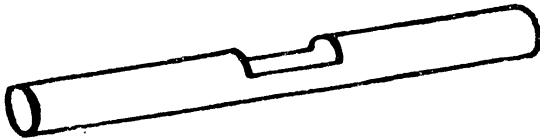


FIGURE 4.

to Nos. 3 and 4, through the hole to the second layer, and then it will be resting on No. 5 position in the central layer.

Follow the numbers round (easy, is it not?) until the ball drops through the hole on to No. 8, in the lower layer. This is where you must listen carefully, for directly it drops you must raise the point of the heart so that the ball can run round to No. 10. Now be careful, for if the lower V once gets hold of that little piece of polished steel you will have to take it back to the start like a game of Snakes and Ladders.

Roll him gently round to No. 13, where he rests securely against the barrier. Now tip up the puzzle, letting the ball through hole No. 14 in Fig. 2. This is the most difficult part to work, but through the hole in the upper layer we can see what is happening, and with our sketches before us we can see where the holes are.

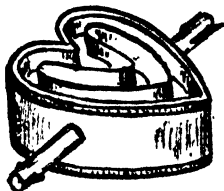
To get the ball to run to No. 17 and the exit we have to pass a hole on the middle layer, and this needs a little circumnavigation, as the sailor would say.

Keep the puzzle on its side with the feathered end of the arrow lowest, and run the ball slowly to No. 15. Here we can slope the

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heart so that the ball leans against the upper layer. Roll the puzzle round and out he comes.

Not very difficult, is it? By the time you have done this a few times it will not be necessary to look at the sketches. In a few seconds the ball can be retrieved from any of its hiding places and extracted, but pass the puzzle to your friend, and let him try.



5.

Backwards and forwards, in at one hole, out at another, now at the top, now at the bottom, rolling round and round, never resting—a way out seems as difficult to find as the exit to the Labyrinth of Babylon. But don't give your puzzle to another Maurice and Violet expecting them to give their attention only to one subject, for when lovers are together their whole attention is concentrated upon themselves, and if you start worrying them, they may be unkind!

The Waiting of Jean Brown

A Story of a Scottish Hamlet

BY MARGARET HOLDEN

THE new minister had paid his last parochial call but one. This he had left till the last, chiefly because it was outside the village and some distance away. He looked forward pleasurably to this call, the cottage was so pretty, so delightfully situated on the hillside and overlooking the bay, and was surrounded by a radiant, well-kept garden. During his walks by night he had noticed that a light always burned in the cottage window, and he wondered what this tiny beacon meant; but, true to his first resolve to gain his impressions at first-hand, he asked no questions.

The elders, with kindest motives, had offered information about some of the church members, but Mr. Allan said, "Please don't tell me *anything*—let me find out for myself; let me come to you for counsel later when I need it."

And his bright, young, earnest face wore such a winning smile that the elders felt their hearts warm to him, and though they sometimes were not sure that his "doctrine was althegither soond," though they feared he attached too much importance to "works," and one evening cautiously whispered the grave word "Antinomianism," yet were they won over by his loving personality, and reminded each other "that he was but young yet, and they maun stand by him, and help him with their experience."

And certainly they faithfully carried out their resolve, boldly criticising his sermons in their blunt Scots fashion, and discussing theology with him when they foregathered by the seashore in the early forenoons. The minister enjoyed these discussions, though sometimes he had hard work to hold his own, and marvelled at the wisdom and knowledge these uneducated men of the sea possessed; and he made it a habit to walk down each morning and join them.

He climbed the hillside on a sunshiny afternoon to the cottage.

The Waiting of Jean Brown

An old woman sat erect in the porch knitting. She rose as he entered the garden gate. She was tall, straight, and slim, like a young woman; her snow-white cap rested on soft white hair—"hair with a ripple in it"—that framed a face that was the most striking the young man had ever looked upon. The face bore a perfect network of wrinkles, but was handsome even with the marks time had left upon it, and the black eyes looked young.

She rose from her seat and invited him to enter. He followed her into the house, remarking on the beauty of her garden and the view over the bay; but she merely nodded in reply and reached down the big Bible, dusting it and laying it before him in silence.

"You would like me to read?" he queried.

"If it pleases ye, sir," she answered.

The Book opened easily at many places, but most easily at a chapter in the Apocrypha—the second chapter of Ecclesiasticus. He noticed the fourteenth verse was underlined. He read on; the old woman sat by the window gazing at the sea. Suddenly he ceased reading.

"Would you rather I didn't read?" he asked.

She turned and looked at him for the first time.

"Ye think I'm no' listenin', but I hear ye, I hear ye; forby, I ken every word—they were meant for me: 'Woe unto you that have lost patience! and what will ye do when the Lord shall visit you?'" She repeated these words several times to herself, and then she bowed her head and wept bitterly.

The minister closed the Book; it made his heart ache to see the aged woman weeping in that grief-stricken manner, and he prayed for a message to help and comfort.

He took the work-hardened old hands in his firmly, and repeated one of the verses he had read—

"'Look at the generations of old and see, did ever any trust in the Lord and was confounded? or did any abide in His fear and was forsaken? or whom did He ever despise that called upon Him?'"

The minister did not know whether the distressed woman heard him, but her sobs ceased after a time and her lips moved as though in prayer. She seemed to have forgotten his presence, so he stole softly from the room.

The following morning the minister walked down to the shore, and found, to his relief, only one man there.

"Mr. Brown," he said almost immediately, "I have come for information, as I promised to do if I found myself at a loss. I went to call on a Mrs. Brown yesterday, up on the hill, and I was much puzzled."

"Ay! ye'll no' be the first that's been puzzled, I'm thinkin'."

"Can you tell me anything about her—anything that will help me to understand her? She seems to be under the weight of some great trouble."

"Ay! she's been under that weight this mony a year. Weel, maybe I'd better tell ye her bit story. Ye're maist sure to hear it some time, and naebody kens it sae weel's masel', seein' I was an eye-witness o' ane o' the maist important acts in this tragedy—— But here she comes."

The minister looked round, and saw the old woman advancing towards them.

She looked straight at Mr. Brown and asked—

"Hae ye seen him?"

"Na."

"Hes the boat *no'* come in *yet*?"

"Na, it's no' come, mither."

She turned away and walked to the water's edge, shading her eyes with her hand, and gazing intently out to sea.

"That's how she is, ye see, an' has been for fifty year, aye seekin', seekin' what she'll never find."

"You called her mother? I wondered if you were related!"

"Ay! She mairrit ma faither. An' noo, sir, I'll tell ye her story, puir body. Fifty-five year ago Jean Broon was a braw young lass, the dochter of weel-to-dae folk, an' weel brocht up an' eddicated. She met ma faither: he was a fine, han'some man (Dr. Orr's his leevin' image), and she mairrit him, sair against the wull o' her ain folk. He had aye been wild—broke his first wife's heart, 'tis said—but she thocht, like mony anither, her influence was gauna keep him richt. Weel, it did for a whilie; then he got wearit, and slippit back intil his auld ways. For five years she strove wi' him; twa bairns had come in that time. He lost his wark, of coorse, but she warked an' keepit things goin'.

"I mind fine how nicht after nicht I used to lie watchin' her sewin' awa' for dear life, the tears rinnin' doon her cheeks—tears she daurdna lat fa' on her wark—an' aye risin' an' goin' t' the door an' listenin'. She aye keepit a lamp burnin' in the winda to guide him hame. An' then I'd hear his shamblin' steps, an' syne his oaths an' brutal words. But she was aye patient, an' hopet on, an' tried again an' again, an' aye forgave him when the mornin's remorse cam'. Ay, sir, the drunkard's mornin' remorse is a peetifu' thing!

"Weel, ae nicht he didna come hame, an' in the mornin' he was brocht, but siccan an object, his heid bleedin' an's claes torn off's back;

The Waiting of Jean Brown

an' the men that brocht him tell't her some tale that froze a' her peety. But she nursed him for days, only speakin' when she was obleeged. When he got better, he begged for paurdon as usual, but she wadna answer him.

"Then one mornin' they cam' up frae the boats (he'd been gaun to the fishin' some wee while), an' askit if he was able tae go wi' them. He said 'Yes,' an' then he cam' up to her (she was sittin' sewin' by the winda), an' he said—

"'Jean, wull ye no' forgie me this ance mair?'

"She never answered.

"'Jeanie! forgie me, lass. Gie me ae kiss afore I go.'

"But she turned awa' scornfully, an' he flung oot o' the door in a passion.

"An' he never cam' back! Frae that day to this the boat has never been heard tell o'. For a time she was fair dementit, an' sin' syne, every mornin', rain or shine, she has been doon to the shore to look for him, an' she aye asks the same questions, 'Hae ye seen him? Has the boat no' come in yet?' An' every night the lamp burns in the winda to guide him hame. In every ither way she's quite sensible; brocht up her faimly, workin' hard to dae't. She's certain he'll come back, an' whiles I think she'll no' dee till she's seen him some way—in a veesion, maybe."

A few months later the minister was sitting in his study trying to read, but every few minutes pausing to listen to the storm. The wind had been rising all day, and a tremendous gale was blowing.

He went to the door in answer to a loud knocking, to find Mr. Brown on the doorstep.

"Wull ye please come wi' me, Mr. Allan? Ma mither's doon by the shore in a' this wind and rain, and we canna get her awa'. She says she kens her man'll come back the nicht."

The minister hurriedly put on his boots and coat, and hastened down to the beach. The wind lifted them off their feet as it rushed through the openings that led to the sea, and moaned like a dirge through the narrow, tortuous wynds; and the angry waves broke against the stone pier with a roar as of thunder, and tore the shingle back with them as they retreated, dashing it furiously again upon the stony beach.

They found the little group of men and women surrounding the old woman, and trying to protect her from the violence of the wind. She had slipped weakly to the ground, but refused to go away.

Dr. Orr had joined the minister and Mr. Brown. The doctor was a young, handsome, cheery man, a great favourite with everybody.

"We'll just carry her away bodily," he said, when the anxious son told the doctor about his mother.

The lantern which one of the men carried threw a weird light on the little group standing there, buffeted by the fierce wind and soaked by the pitiless rain. To the surprise of all, when the three men appeared, the old woman held out her hands to the doctor, murmuring some words which did not reach their ears through the noise of the storm.

The minister and the doctor joined their hands and carried her home. They were followed by two kindly women. They took her into the warm cottage kitchen, and the women undressed her and put her to bed. She was quite unresisting, and kept murmuring—

"I kent he wad come back."

As soon as she was in bed the doctor came forward to examine her, but she seized both his hands, gazing into his face earnestly.

"Eh, Sandy!" she whispered, "it has seemed a lang while, an' noo I'm deein', wull ye no' forgie me for ma hardness? I've waited lang an' wearily for ye, an' I dinna think ye can forgie me noo. D'ye mind, Sandy? Ye askit for ae kiss, an' I refused ye; an' noo, noo I'm feart ye dinna care."

Her son stepped forward.

"Ye'll no' mind, sir," he said apologetically to the doctor. "She's a puir doited auld body; she doesna ken what she's sayin'. She thinks ye're her gudeman come back. Ye're fell like him, ye ken, sir."

"Oh, is that it?" said the doctor. With a look of ineffable tenderness he bent over the bed.

"Mother dear," he said, "I am *quite* sure you are forgiven for everything," and then he kissed the withered, sad old face. She smiled happily, and soon she passed into a quiet sleep. At daybreak this deepened into the sleep that knows no waking. Jean Brown's waiting was ended.

By a Hair's-breadth

How Elsie Mayne Stood for her Faith

BY E. CHARLES VIVIAN

I

IN the time when Elsie Mayne lived, there were pleasant spaces about the little village of Charing, where the Cross was still remembered best as the mark of good Queen Eleanor's resting-place on her last sad journey ; the church of Saint Martin stood literally "in the fields" to northward of the Cross, and in the daytime there was shade from either sun or rain under the trees that looked as if, having stood for centuries, they would go on defying time for centuries more. There was no thought in the mind of any man that some day far hence men would set up a national gallery on the spot where Elsie and her companions played while daylight held ; after nightfall, there were too many foot-pads in the quiet spaces about Charing village for girls to remain out at their play.

Merriest of all the girls about Charing village was Elsie Mayne, leader in the games that they played there, and most justly known even beyond the village for her art of mimicry. She could give you the great people of the age, for Roger Mayne, her father, held a place at court—there had been a Mayne at Crecy, and one had died for Henry at Bosworth field, and that Henry's son had taken care that the Maynes should not want preferment. Thus, Elsie knew, either by hearsay or by actual sight, what were the ways even of Henry himself, and, as a child, she had once seen Anne Boleyn before that queen's downfall, over which was more of speculation and whispered conclusion than over any other of the king's matrimonial ventures. Elsie would show you how the queen walked when she saw her, and would give you just that trick of turning the head which may have caught Henry's fancy.

"Too true, child," her father told her, once, "and take care lest your tricks of mimicry with great people do not yet cause you ill."

But, being young, Elsie was careless of such counsel, and, but a day after receiving that advice, she was rousing shrieks of laughter from her playmates with an imitation of Sir Thomas More's most courtly mannerisms, when there came by the clearing in which she was performing a brilliant cavalcade of which the central figure was a girl of little more than Elsie's own age. A morose, gloomy-looking maid was this one, who glowered on the girls and made scant return to their obeisances—for they knew her by her following, and stood with every appearance of respect until she and those with her had passed.

Even after she had gone by they seemed chilled by her passing, and there was a silence among them till Rose Martin, Elsie's nearest friend, remarked in a way that showed how she intended to dispel the gloom—

"Are we all to be sour-faced, too? Elsie, have you no cure for our gloom?"

At that Elsie proposed Lucy Adams should tell them a story, but Lucy said she knew no fresh stories. Thereupon Elsie, having a thought of her own, bade them wait, and went beyond the thicket at the end of the clearing. Presently there came back from beyond the thicket one who moved stiffly and glowered upon the little gathering.

"Curtsey, you wooden maids!" she called to them. "Way for Harry's sour-faced daughter, and make your obeisances as loyal subjects ought."

It was not the words, but the stiff, prim manner of them, which won the round of laughter. Elsie had set her features to the sourness which was habitual with Mary even in her youth, and the settled gloom with which she frowned on her companions altogether overset their gravity—it was so exact a replica of that which they had just seen.

"Hail to the sour-faced princess!" Lucy Adams called, and "Way for sour-faced Mary!" cried Rose Martin—and Elsie, strutting commandingly, noted no more than did they that the cavalcade which had caused the play was returning on them, in time to catch Elsie's imitation and Rose Martin's call, as well as the laughter of the rest.

Seeing, though not in time, who had come on them, the girls stood as if frozen in their attitudes—and Elsie's pose was utter caricature of the way in which Mary herself gazed on them all. But Elsie's face was no redder than that of Henry's daughter, who had grasped all the import of the little play, and heard her own name with the epithet by which they knew her. She was scarlet under her normally sallow skin with rage at them, and, had she had the power, would have made them

feel her displeasure in just such a way as her father dealt with those who set themselves against him, for she had in her all Henry's capacity for vindictive rage, with none of his finer qualities to outweigh it.

Now, while they stood, she beckoned to a boy who was in her company, and spoke some words to him, at which he came over to where Elsie stood. He was a fine-set youth, obviously little in love with his task, and to Elsie it seemed that he came reluctantly.

"The Princess would have your name," he said, almost timidly.

She looked full at him, saw in his eyes no condemnation of her prank, and took heart. "Elsie Mayne," she answered.

"Mine," he said, "is Arthur Waterfield. We may meet again, but I would bid you have a care for yourself lest we meet not in open field, as I would wish to see you. Our Princess is not as her sister."

With that he turned away, and gave the name to Mary. She, for her part, stood glowering while the colour that rage had brought to her cheeks faded out, and while she stood she kept her eyes on Elsie.

"The day may come," she said at last, "and I would know you again, you Elsie Mayne."

She passed on with her following, but the shadow of her presence remained for the rest of the time that the girls spent there. They spoke in lowered voices, looked to the edge of the clearing at times, and Elsie gave them no more imitations of famous people, nor did they desire it, for the time. Most of all they spoke of Mary's anger.

"God made her so," Rose said, sententiously, "and it may be that she is content with the making."

"God made her not thus," Elsie disagreed, rather sharply, "for you or I might cloud our eyes and frown on all the good that is in the world, if we chose. Of a certainty God made Mary, but the sour face is Mary's own making, and none other's."

"Saw you all how our Elsie made conquest of that youth who came at the bidding of the sour-faced one?" Lucy asked, a trifle maliciously. "He had more than his errand to tell her."

"He had a word of warning," Elsie put in, but flushed all the same at thought of how Arthur Waterfield had gazed at her. "It was but a well-meant courtesy of his, no more."

"So sure, Elsie?" Lucy mocked. "I venture a guess that the gallant will make cause to search for you, yet."

"Then, let him," Elsie answered, laughing, "for he was a most proper and well-mannered boy, just as I would have my own brother be."

"And it was a truly brotherly manner, that of his, Elsie," said

Rose Martin, "but not of the sort that brothers show to their own sisters."

"Chaff all you will," said Elsie, "for I care little. And now who is for home—the sun is low, and we have none too much time?"

The reminder dispersed them; there were too many tales of what happened in the byways about Charing for girls to linger there beyond sunset, and in a very little time the clearing of their play was vacated.

That evening Elsie confessed to her father what had happened, at which he recalled his own warning to her. She told him, too, of young Waterfield's way of delivering the Princess's message.

"Aye," he said, "a right and proper lad, that same Arthur—I knew his father, years ago. I must seek him out, and find whether this prank leads further than the day, though in all likelihood the priest-ridden Princess will for her own sake say no more of it. I must seek him out—yes, I must seek him out."

And thus it chanced that, when Elsie reached home the next evening, she found there with her father the youth whom she had met in the clearing under such inauspicious circumstances, who reassured her, however, as to any result accruing from her mimicry.

"Whatever her will may be, our priest-ridden Princess has no power to work you ill," he assured Elsie, "and, if such a one as myself may venture to offer service, I should always be glad to stand between you and harm."

"Priest-ridden—aye," Roger Mayne put in. "It will be an ill day for England if ever Mary comes to possess power. To my knowledge she is in the hands of bigots who would, an' they could, put Rome above the kingdom, and the pope before God."

But, as for Elsie and Arthur, it was their will to talk of other things than affairs of State, for they had youth and the thoughts of youth. And Roger Mayne, knowing the boy for what he was, had no desire to spoil their talk or their dreams. So, boy and girl, they talked and laughed out the evening, until it was time for Arthur to go to his home.

"We shall meet again," he told Elsie, at parting.

"I trust so," she answered him.

"And I trust so—that we may meet many times," he said, while Roger smiled comprehendingly.

Now, of how they met, or of how often they met, there is no need to tell, for the ways of youth in such things as these are always the same. Until Arthur went, sent on affairs of the State, to the west country, in the closing days of Henry's reign, and there came a period when Elsie, regarding her play with her girl companions as something rather childish now, set herself to wait for his return, knowing how

much it meant to her. And while she dreamed, half child and half woman, there gathered the clouds that came on England when Henry and Henry's son had passed, to give place to the period of darkness which preceded the dawn of the golden age.

II

The freedom of thought and action in matters of faith which marked the boy-king's short reign gave place to a tumult of doubts and perplexities in which Roger Mayne determined to leave his place at court. Being now a middle-aged man, he judged it time to retire, and thus went out to a little place that was his beyond royal Richmond, a quiet house within view of the river. This decision came so late that he was among those who witnessed the execution of Lady Jane Grey, much against his will, since he was a kindly man to whom that tragedy seemed such a crime as even Henry, in his worst moments, would never have dreamed of committing. And, after that, came the reign of the sour-faced queen, whose thoughts were more with Spain and Philip its king than with the country she ruled so evilly; and who, for Philip's sake as much as for that of the Romish diplomats who sought to sway her, burnt and tortured in order to make England subject to Rome. There was a stubborn woman's reason behind her bigotry; if she could make England Catholic, she might win Philip's heart, and to her, soured and lonely as she was, such winning was worth the lives of a few of her subjects.

These things lie in the domain of history, and yet by the twisting of the wheel of fate they had part in the life of Elsie Mayne. For in her early twenties she was as impetuous and incautious as she had been in the day when Mary caught her at mimicry of "sour-face," and it chanced, once, after she had gone to live with her father at the house beyond Richmond, she repeated a statement of his—one which he had often made—to the effect that Mary would, if she could, "put Rome above the kingdom, and the pope before God." Roger, courtier-wise, had never voiced that opinion save when sure of his hearers; but Elsie was not so careful, and her words travelled by devious ways to other ears than those for which they were intended. It was when the news was flaming throughout the country of the burning of Cranmer, and there was talk, here and there, of a rising against the tyranny which gave men no freedom of conscience or of action.

Written, perverted and exaggerated, Elsie's careless words went in company with those of other suspects to be sifted and weighed by great ones at the centre of authority; they were evidence that even the youth

of the country was treasonable in intent, and in the end they came before the thin-lipped, sallow Queen. There was read out to her a list of statements collected from among her subjects by spies and inquisitors, together with the names of those who made the statements, and when that of Elsie Mayne was read out she bade the reading stop.

"Give us the name again," she commanded.

The name was given—"Elsie Mayne."

Mary sat silent. This dark present receded from her mind, and again she went with such a little following as her father's court allowed her through a clearing in which were girls at play. One of them mocked her, while others applauded the impersonation of "sour-faced Mary," and the time was summer, she remembered. And that girl's name was Elsie Mayne.

"It is enough," she said; "but read on."

The rest of the list was read out to her, and at the end she thought again for a while. The bitterness of the far-gone day, when the girlish play had showed her real self to her, was on her yet.

"Bring a mirror, a hand mirror," she commanded harshly.

It was brought to her as she sat in council, and so strange was the request from her that those about her stared at their queen. She took it and looked long at her own face, and in the end laid it aside, making no remark nor explaining the strange request. She had grown thinner of lip, sourer of face, than when Elsie had played her play in the clearing, and perhaps in that minute she knew herself for an old and disappointed woman, since for all her burnings of heretics and attempts at establishing the cruel faith which Philip approved, he showed no sign of coming near her.

"Sour-faced Mary!" It was in her mind like a sting.

"Of these names that we have heard, we bid you take cognisance with a view to examination of the persons and due report—all save one," she commanded. "For we know the name of Elsie Mayne from a day long gone, and bid that she be seized and examined more strictly than the rest, as soon as may be. Her father's services have secured him immunity from our displeasure, though his religion is suspect, but the girl—she is dangerous, as these words of hers prove. Let her be seized and put to the examination with all speed."

It was a little, mean vengeance for a girlish escapade, but history shows Mary as a little and mean woman. Yet there was one to whom the news of the Queen's order came before it reached to those who should execute it. Arthur Waterfield, still held to a post about the court, heard and understood, and he got him two horses, one to ride and one to lead, and with them set out an hour before sunset along

the muddy track which led out, through Charing village, westward along the course of the river. There was a ford at Chiswick where he crossed to the south side before the daylight failed, and, pressing on, he came in the late evening to the house beyond Richmond, to see, after five years of absence, the face of Elsie Mayne. For life and his work had taken him away from her, against his will, though he, like Elsie, had known that some day he would return.

There was a sound of singing within the house when Arthur reined up before it, and a light showed from one of its windows. He tied his horses by the gate, went to the door of the house and knocked, and Elsie herself came to him. Her face looked starlike in the summer evening's light as she looked up at him, and she spoke no word, not even his name, but looked up at him as if she had come to the end of desire. And he, for his part, stood silent too for a little space, for he had left the promise of girlhood when last he bade her good-bye, and this beauty of dawning womanhood that faced him held him bound, as if by a spell, for the minute. And then he remembered.

"What is the singing, Elsie?" he asked her. "It is a late hour for any gathering, and I wanted talk with you apart from any others."

"It is some few who come to us to worship God in our own way, since papacy holds the churches," she answered; "and there is no one here whom we cannot trust as—as I would trust you."

"That is well," he said, relieved.

"But what brings you at this hour?" she asked.

He told her, as briefly as he could, of how words of hers had been carried through to the Queen's council, and of the order for her arrest.

"And I came to save you, given your father's permission," he ended. "I would take you to my mother's house on the Welsh border; but, if we are to win through, we start within the hour."

Elsie thought over it, standing in the dusk by the door, and at last Arthur laid his hand on her arm.

"I know your thought," he said, "how others have died for the faith, and how great a thing it is to show fortitude and example. Yet, think of your father, and, if you will, of one other to whom you are dear, and so consent to take the road to Wales."

"There is no question of consent," she answered, understanding, "for if life had not been sweet before, this hour renders it of account."

"You knew I should come back to you?" he asked.

She gave him her hand to hold. "I have not doubted it, all these years," she answered.

Then she took him inside the house, and told Roger of the day's

happenings and of Arthur's plan. And, within the hour, Elsie had packed such few things as she could take with her, and they two set out in the light of a three-quarter moon, toward the ford by which they might cross the river on their way to Oxford. For Arthur, who knew the western roads, had set a course by Oxford and Banbury and Gloucester, and had determined to travel by night, so that the Queen's messengers might get as little news as possible of their going.

"And you?" Roger asked him as they set off. "Your place at the court—what will come of this flight?"

"I hold my place of small account beside Elsie's safety," Arthur answered; "and it will be time to think of retrieving that fortune when she is safe under my mother's care."

They two set out, and at dawn came the inquisitors to take Elsie for trial. Roger faced them and heard their questionings.

"She fled, I know not why, last night," he told them. "I am waiting now for horses to follow in pursuit. There is rumour that in company with a young gallant she was seen setting out on the Southampton road. A wayward, flighty girl—ever a burden to me!" And he sighed, heartbrokenly.

The inquisitors swung their horses to the south, and set out in pursuit of the eloping couple.

III

For the most part they travelled by night and rested by day. Arthur, having traversed the road many times in the royal service, was able to find friends for each halt who found them shelter, and whom, to his thought, were worthy of trust; yet there was one at Banbury who was unworthy, for the news went back to London that he had passed that way in company with one who answered to the description of the girl that the vindictive Queen would have had put to the question. But they two, going on their way, knew nothing of this; they rode through summer nights talking of many things, and those who set out in pursuit were days behind them, for the news of their going went back slowly to London.

There came into Elsie's mind, as they rode one night, a thought of what this escort must cost Arthur. At first she had taken it as quite a natural thing that he should come to her in danger, giving himself up to her service, but now she questioned him.

"What will be said of your absence from your post?" she asked abruptly.

He laughed a little. "There is no longer any post," he said. "I have been truant too long, apart from the errand on which I came."

This she considered for a time. "You have given up all, for me?" she asked at last.

"I have given up all but you," he corrected her. "When all is put in the balance against you, there can be no question of the way the balance will fall—thus I ride with you."

"Knowing me outlawed and a fugitive," she pursued.

"Knowing you——" he broke off from what he would have said—"knowing only that you must be placed in safety—this is no place nor time to tell you more."

But, without telling, she knew. Such loyalty needed no explanation, no telling of its motive.

The shadow of the Queen's will lay over the land; they came on news of a burning that was to be at Gloucester, as they passed through, and ever and again they would see a cowed figure which told of the blight that lay over England. There was, among the people with whom they stayed, reluctance to speak openly of their thought, and there was a sense that anyone with whom they spoke might be a spy to tell of hostility to Rome. It was at Gloucester that they first heard of the Queen's illness, and first learned, too, that their flight had been discovered. A courier had come in, hard riding, on his way to Bristol, and he brought news of all the doings of the court in London. Mainly, he told of the Queen's illness, but there was talk, as always, of a rising; and there had been a scurry of men setting out on the road to the west in search of one Elsie Mayne, in whom the Queen seemed to take a vindictive interest far greater than the unimportance of such a person warranted. All this Arthur learned, and with the tidings he rejoined Elsie.

They had come in an hour after dawn, intending to rest throughout the day, but with this news they set out again within the hour. And, riding steadily westward throughout the morning, they came to the summit of a rise and saw how a troop of horse, hard riding, followed after them.

And now Arthur, who had lengthened out the journey by many days, regretted his leisurely escort. Three days had they spent in Cirencester, and at other times they had lingered a day or more on some pretext or other, for he had been so certain that none followed, and thus had delayed and delayed, lengthening out what were to him golden days. And, seeing the horsemen who followed, he had intuition that they were in pursuit. His horse, like the one which Elsie rode was unfit for flight, for they had been ridden the greater part of the night, and this day's journey was to have been but a leisurely ride away from Gloucester and any spies in the city who might have heard

the courier's news—it was not meant for a hurried flight, and Arthur knew well that the horses could not endure such.

They made the best pace they could, and the morning had almost gone when the troop came up with them and bade them stand. There was in charge an officer whom Arthur knew, and beside him rode one of the cowed figures whom all England hated.

"These are ours," he said to the officer. "I know the girl."

But, when they would have made Arthur prisoner, he called on the officer to show warrant of arrest, or sign of authority. The cowed priest urged, but to no purpose—there was no authority save for the arrest of Elsie Mayne, who had used treasonable speech against the Queen—and Arthur, sure of a way to rescue her, laughed in the priest's face.

"Magna Charta holds, as yet," he taunted the man. "Yet, arrest or no arrest, I will ride with you back to London. You take all that is of account to me, so I go with you."

And, thus going, he was able to lighten Elsie's journey back in many ways, though he could not come to speech with her alone. Making friends with the officer, who had little liking for his task, he was able to procure her lodgings at the places where they stayed, and gradually to disarm suspicion regarding himself. He knew—knowing her as he did—how she trusted to him, and trusted also to One who, if there were no way out from this tangle, would give her strength to endure to the end, even though that end were the stake and the faggots which had been end for so many. He knew, too, that as this troop travelled there were many days between them and London, and it was in his mind that a rescue might yet be planned on the way.

Thus they went back through Gloucester, and after some days came to Banbury, where the officer in charge of the troop intended to stay a day to get horses shod, and see to other needs of his troop. And Arthur, rising on the morning after their arrival, was in the market-place, casting about in his mind as to how he should find a means to free Elsie, when he saw how one rode in on a wearied horse from the east, and he went over to the man.

"Greeting," he said, "and where do you journey to?"

"To Bristol," the man answered, "bearing news of the Queen's death."

"Mary is dead?" Arthur asked, staring up at him.

The courier nodded. "Might your name be Waterfield, sir?" he asked.

"That is my name," Arthur answered.

"I thought I had a memory of you in my mind. What brought

it back was that they said that the Queen asked if you and a girl—some Elsie, it was—had yet been captured, since she would that that same Elsie should be brought to her when she had won back her health enough to talk."

"So," Arthur said musingly, "she kept her hate to the end."

But now there came a stir in the quaint old town, for the news of Mary's death had got abroad. The first sign of it was that a priest with his cowl flung back came running, and after him came a number of the townspeople, mostly carrying sticks, but some trusting to their hands when they caught him. Arthur, moved by a sudden thought, stopped some of them.

"There is easier game for you over at the inn there," he told them. "An inquisitor, fresh from London, who has caught a girl to burn her, is still asleep there."

In a little time he had the satisfaction of seeing the priest who had ridden with the troop come out from the inn, dragged out by a score of hands—there was a recent burning that Banbury remembered, and here was one who lived by burnings. They took him to a pond and ducked him again and again, and the officer in charge of the troop looked on and smiled.

"You are lenient with these people," Arthur observed to him.

"My task was an ill one," the officer answered, "as it has been ill all these years to see England torn through the courage of people who would worship God in their own way. Think you I liked taking an innocent maid to who knows what fate?"

"Yet you took her," Arthur said, thoughtfully.

"I did but my duty, liking it none the more for that."

"And now?" Arthur asked him.

"I go on doing my duty," he answered.

"'Tis an expensive business, the care of a troop of horse," Arthur mused. "I mind me of a half-dozen rose nobles of the reign of our Edward of blessed memory,"—he took a little leather bag from his pocket and fingered it—"and if the sentry in charge of Mistress Mayne were to look the other way for the space of an hour, while I get two horses saddled——"

The officer thought it over. The Queen was dead—it was known fairly generally that the Princess Elizabeth would sweep away the old order of things; a day or a week—and it were easy to delay that time on the journey to London—would make this irregularity a praiseworthy thing, perhaps. And six rose nobles—*six*!

"The sentry might suffer from an affliction of the eyesight," the officer confessed.

The little leather bag changed hands.

"Where do you take me?" Elsie asked of Arthur, a couple of hours later.

"Back to your home," he answered. "Mary—sour-faced Mary—is dead, and now you shall hold your faith as you will."

Before them lay the hills beyond which was Oxford; back of them was the great plain of middle England, no more to smoke with the fires of martyrdoms. Behind them, too, was Arthur's home, and the silver-haired lady to whom he had hoped to lead Elsie for refuge.

"The Queen being dead, long live the Queen," Arthur said. "It is by the hair's-breadth of her dying that you escape, though in any case I had found some way to save you."

"I have learned much, on this journey," Elsie confessed. "Most of all have I learned of loyalty, and of sacrifice through loyalty——"

"I take you back to your home," Arthur said, "that I may claim the right to take you to my own. You know, Elsie?"

"I know—that even now the right is yours, and that I will come," she answered.

The sun began to fling their shadows behind them; they rode on toward the little house beyond Richmond, but to them it was as if they rode in a golden light towards an Eden, the end of danger and the end of all desire.

On the Great Caravan Road

Africa's Famous Highway from Coast to Coast

BY MALCOLM PORTAL HYATT

A DUSTY track winding through the bush, the same now as it has been for hundreds upon hundreds of years ; a trade route when London was a cluster of mud huts ;—such is one of the oldest of the many wonderful old roads of the world which are one by one becoming doomed under the march of civilisation.

Running across Africa, from sea to sea, it starts at Tripoli, through date-palm groves, past Roman monuments and ruins, through deep rocky gorges out into the scorching sand of the Sahara.

Then, from the thin bush-country north of Lake Tchad, the home of the white oryx, it comes at last to the rich corn-lands and rolling grasses of Kano—a city unheard of by “the man in the street,” yet the great centre of native trade both now and for the last two thousand years. Then on to the south-west it goes again through Zaria Kontagora, Ilorin, and many towns great and small, dwindling gradually away to end, as a mere bush-track, in the fever-haunted swamps of the West Coast.

Passing through the territory of many races and tribes—Arabs, Touaregs, Hausas, Nupes, Pagans, Cannibals—the road belongs to the Hausas, who, unlike any other native African races, are not content to stay in their own villages and cultivate the land, but trade with other races, and are perhaps the greatest travellers of the earth.

Watch the life on the great road, almost kaleidoscopic in its movements and colour. Across the road in a little wayside market, a dozen women are sitting under a shady tree, each with her baskets and dishes of food for sale to passers-by. Wooden bowls full of milk, balls of cooked meat rolled in flour, little scraps of meat in yellow batter and skewered on a slip of cane, limes, bananas, kola-nuts, sugar-cane, native sweets, and many other eatables make the show of provisions they sell. A line of tall, forked sticks stands alongside the “market.”

In the fork of these the carriers lean one end of their load, resting the other end on the six-foot stick they carry for the purpose. In this way there is no trouble in lifting the heavy loads from the ground on to their heads, and the forked sticks, standing ready for them, induce weary travellers to rest and buy food.

A string of white-clad Hausa traders comes along, each man armed with a sword and carrying a tightly corded basket—kola-nuts, no doubt—and they have probably been down the Niger to the coast to buy them. From the north appears a drove of live-stock—little brown goats, tall, leggy, black-and-white Hausa sheep with big curly horns, white cattle with black ears; and behind them the Fulani herdsmen—tall, wild-looking men dressed in rags, each carrying a bundle of long spears slung over his left shoulder, the broad points resting in a leather bucket. Behind the drove is the owner, mounted on a scraggy little brown pony, and appearing more like a shapeless bundle of white cloth than a man. His voluminous white turban is down to his eyebrows, one fold of it covering his entire face up to the eyes.

Then comes a mixed drove of pack-donkeys and pack-bulls—the donkeys small, but well fed—each with its panniers of raw hide, or baskets of matting. The pack-cattle are huge beasts with long horns and humps like the Indian Brahmin bulls. They are loaded with a heterogeneous collection of merchandise—grain, sleeping-mats, cooking-utensils; and on top of one such load sits a very old man, white-haired, white-bearded, and shrivelled—almost more like a solemn old monkey than a man.

Then there is a clatter of hoofs and a jingling of chains and bits as a gorgeous party goes by—evidently one of the Emir's chief men and his followers. Ahead of the party run two men carrying black silver-tipped wands and shouting the name and titles of the great man. He himself is dressed in the usual flowing, green-embroidered, white robe and white turban, and wears an outer cloak of dark blue. His horse's trappings are a blaze of colour, adorned with triangles and squares of many-coloured leather, a fringe of jingling little metal plates hanging all over the unfortunate beast's face and eyes, and a broad collar round its neck. The saddle, covered with embroidered red leather, has an enormous peak and cantle; and wherever there is room, on saddle or saddle-cloth, is embroidery or leather-work. The whole effect is gorgeous.

Behind the great man comes his retinue, clad in all the colours of the rainbow. So the cavalcade disappears in a cloud of dust towards the distant city; the ponies prancing and curvetting, urged on by spurs, yet restrained by the cruel spiked bits.

The great road runs along to the city whose red clay walls can be dimly seen in the distance; the "Harmattan"—the dry wind from the desert—is blowing, and shrouding the land with a grey silvery haze. Just outside the gate the place is swarming with donkeys, cattle, sheep, and goats. The packs and loads of the animals are ranged in long lines on the bare ground, with the owners or their slaves keeping watch. The pungent smoke of the cowdung fires gives an extra twinge of pain to eyes already sore and smarting from the dust of the great road.

The walls are falling into ruins; for, there being no war in the country, the need to keep them in repair no longer exists. Two or three camels are coming out through the narrow gate, taking up as much of the road as they can—dirty dun-coloured brutes, supercilious and evil looking, well deserving of their name as the most ill-tempered of beasts.

"Unclean! unclean! Pity, in the name of Allah!" Sitting in the niche of the gate and on the shady side of the street within the gate, are the lepers—"the halt, the maimed, and the blind"—showing hands without fingers, legs without feet, turning up dull, sightless eyes—all maimed and crippled by leprosy. They sit at the gates of the city asking for alms as they did at the dawn of Christianity, asking and getting.

An old man dressed in rags passes in through the gate, driving a donkey loaded with ears of corn; he pulls out a bundle of ears and drops them into a wooden bowl on the ground before one poor cripple. An old woman, bent and shrivelled, hobbles along bearing a great bundle of firewood: she must have carried it far, and she is old and weak; yet she spares a few sticks for a woman with only one foot. Many of the passers-by have something to give—a piece of-sugar-cane, some cooked meal, or some cowrie-shells. It is a pitiful sight.

Within the city is a veritable maze of narrow streets bounded by high, mud walls, each man's house or hut being enclosed in its own compound. There are a few trees—pawpaws, with their crowns of great leaves on a tall bare stem, the fruit clustering thickly below the crown; fan-palms, with festoons of great golden fruits; other palms, tall and feathery; limes, and here and there great shady trees under which men find shelter from the burning sun. In the evenings these trees, the palms especially, are the resting-places of innumerable birds. On one beautiful palm will be, perhaps, twenty or thirty vultures—loathsome, dun-coloured birds, with bare red necks and evil eyes. The next tree looks from a distance as though covered with snow, for a great flock of white egrets have made it their roosting-place.

From far away can be heard the roar of human voices in the "big market." It is to the market that the great caravan road leads, as also do scores of other roads and paths. By pushing a way through the crowd one sees how news can travel in Africa. They say that the people in the market often number from thirty to forty thousand, and among them are found travellers from many parts. One big caravan has just crossed the desert from Tripoli; several small ones have arrived from the coast. Ask the traders where they come from, and the names they tell will remind one of the stories read in youthful days: Timbuctoo, Sokoto, Bonny, Brass, Old Calabar; perhaps, even places in the terrible forests and swamps of the Congo.

Get them to talk of life on the great road, and you will hear strange stories of attacks on caravans by the Touareg of the desert, of slave raids in which they themselves took part, of battle, murder, and sudden death. Or, perhaps, they will tell how only a few years ago the people of one small town killed a white man, and how, after the troops had battered down the walls and stormed the town, the Sultan of Sokoto caused every wall and house to be levelled to the ground; the site of the town, the gardens, the crops—everything in fact—to be ploughed up and sprinkled with salt; finally a curse to be put on it so that no man should ever dwell there again.

The beating of drums near by promises an entertainment of some sort; and, at times, above the sound of the drums, a squeaking noise, which somehow seems familiar, is heard. The crowd parts to let the white men see the fun, and reveals a genuine native Punch-and-Judy show (with Punch's squeak and all complete, but no Dog Toby). Some of the dolls are the ordinary rag variety; but most are past description, for the Hausas like their jokes broad.

But now for the stage and players. The "stage" consists of the chief performer's white robe supported on three sticks; underneath this he sits and shows his dolls through the neck-opening of the robe. The players number six in all; one young man alongside the stage carries on comic conversations with the dolls, two other men play most energetically on big drums, two quite good-looking young women squat on the ground singing and beating time on large tin bowls, which also serve to receive contributions of cowries from the spectators.

After a time the principal performer emerges from under the "stage" to make his bow. He is a big splendidly built man, with his mop of hair plaited into about a dozen tails, which stand out all round in the most fantastic fashion. His principal garment is a really fine kilt of fringed and ornamented leather strips, and round his ankles are wound long pieces of chain which jingle as he dances.

Another entertainment is in progress close by. A young man stands in the middle of a circle of amused spectators, playing vigorously on a small drum, which he holds tucked under his left arm. He stands in a crouching attitude, intently watching the crowd. Then someone throws him a cowrie-shell which he catches in his mouth ; then another, and others as fast as a man can toss them to him, much to the delight of the crowd. Evidently it is quite a lucrative profession, judging by the contents of the bowl into which he disgorges his takings when his mouth gets inconveniently full.

These Hausas are quite clever weavers, and large quantities of native cloth are on sale in the market. A house near by is a regular factory. In the doorway sit two or three women spinning threads from the raw cotton ; inside the hut are the men working at the looms, the shuttles flying to and fro to the accompaniment of a song in the high-pitched falsetto so dear to the African native. Another woman is cleaning raw cotton, making it ready for the spinners ; and from the inner courtyard comes the rhythmic thudding of the clothbeaters' wooden mallets.

They are sitting, six of them, in front of a big log of wood over which the cloth is stretched, keeping time with their mallets to the leader's song. The scene shows in an almost startling manner what changes the white men bring with them wherever they go. Several thousand years ago, cloth was being made exactly as these Hausas are making it now ; but in a very few years their weaving will be a thing of the past. The railway is coming, and native looms cannot compete with Manchester.

But let us leave the market now, and come out into the great road again, to where the caravans are camping down for the night. The sun is setting in a golden haze of dust, the Harmattan has died away, and the smoke of the cowdung fires rises straight up in the still air. The scene is a busy one ; cattle are being rounded up, donkeys picketed in long lines close by the pack-saddles and loads, and horses hobbled and tethered—each to his own peg.

Darkness comes over the land, and the busy camp settles down to rest. The cowdung fires glow with a dull red light in the gathering dusk, while here and there a wood-fire flashes and sparkles. The full moon is rising behind the city, glowing crimson through the smoke and the dust, which still linger in the air. Ghostly white-robed figures move silently through the encampment, their bare feet making no sound on the hard smooth earth, as they wend their way among the lines of tethered animals to the place of prayer. Soon the leader's voice is heard intoning the evening prayer—a high-pitched melancholy chant,

followed by a muffled impressive murmur as the white-clad worshippers bow their foreheads to the dust and proclaim that God is Great. Then the worshippers silently disperse, and the business and the duties of the day are finished.

The moon rides high in the sky, her radiance now undimmed ; the laughter and talk have ceased, and all is quiet, when savage cries bring the nearest men quickly to their feet. It is nothing unusual, only a stallion who has broken loose and is attacking another. Biting, kicking, and screaming like four-legged fiends, they are separated with difficulty and peace reigns once more.

Out on the plain a hyena howls mournfully, and is answered by others ; nightjars and owls whistle and hoot overhead, and the spirits of the African night hold their sway over the land, until once more the cry of "Allah akhbar !" (God is Great!) announces the dawn—the coming of a new day—and again the unceasing bustle and toil begins on the wonderful great caravan road.

An Angel of Light

"In the Faith of Little Children"

BY MADELEINE MONCRIEFF.

"COME, Master Vernon, get into bed and go to sleep like a good boy—maybe the Lord'll spare your poor Ma if you're good and quiet."

But Vernon, scarce hearing, frisked round the room, laughing at his own antics and those of his shadow upon the wall.

"Where's Vic?" he asked.

"He's coming, but your Pa kept him behind to speak to him. I expect he's telling him how ill the poor Mistress is, and that you boys *must* be as quiet as mice."

"I want to go and talk to Daddy too," said Vernon. "Please take me down, Betty, an' then I'll give you *two big kisses*."

With his plump hands he measured the kisses as he spoke.

"No, Master Vernon; here comes your brother, and your Pa with him."

The door opened, and Vernon, a quaint little figure in his striped sleeping-suit, threw himself upon his father, and was lifted to his favourite shoulder perch—his merry, laughing face a striking contrast to the Vicar's grave countenance. Suddenly a sense of trouble came over the child—why was Vic so quiet instead of romping with Daddy, as was the usual going-to-bed custom? Why was Daddy himself so silent and serious? And why was Betty wiping her eyes? Of course he knew Mummie was ill, but then, Mummie often had some slight illness or other and was soon herself again. What extra calamity could have happened?

Vernon could not guess, yet the sense of trouble lay heavy upon him, as it already lay upon Vic since his father had told him that the Angel of Death would probably visit the Vicarage that very night and take the Mother away.

Vernon's round face grew serious, his lips trembled, and big tears came into his blue eyes and rolled down his cheeks. One splashed upon his father's hand.

"Crying, Sonny?" he said. "Don't cry, but before you go to sleep ask God to take special care of Mother, because she's very, very ill. Now good night, my laddies, be good boys and remember to keep quiet."

He kissed them, and with a soft "God bless you" to each he left them to Betty.

Never had she found them so subdued and manageable. Hardly a word was spoken until, as the final act of the day, they knelt down to say their prayers. Together they repeated the usual petitions and the Lord's Prayer; then each curly head bent lower, and the children silently prayed for their mother.

Vernon was first to look up.

"Betty, I've said 'Please God take very special care of Mummie, 'cause she's very, very ill'—will it be all right?"

"I'm sure I hope so, Master Vernon. I don't know whatever would become of you two poor lambs if your poor Ma was taken."

The elder boy finished his prayers, but did not tell what he had said. He quietly rose to his feet, glancing suspiciously at Betty's tear-stained face, and—

"Come on, Vernie," was all he said.

They climbed into their beds and snuggled down. Betty gathered up their garments and put them ready for the morning, kindled the night-light, took up the candle, and departed, her final "good night" accompanied by voluble instructions to "keep as quiet as mice" and to "go to sleep like young gentlemen."

With heads tucked under the bed-clothes their replies sounded drowsy, but as soon as the maid was gone and her somewhat heavy footsteps had died away, Vic raised himself on his elbow and touched his brother on the shoulder.

"Vernie, you're not asleep, are you?" he said.

"No," answered Vernon promptly, his tumbled curls emerging above the sheet. Another moment and his pillow flew at his brother. It was not returned at once; Vic caught and held it.

"Stop it, Vern," he said authoritatively; "here, take hold of it, and lie down in case Betty comes back. I want to tell you something."

The younger boy was all attention, but Vic refused to talk until his instructions had been obeyed to the letter. Then he said—

"Vernie, Dad thinks Mother's going to die. He says the Angel of Death will very likely come for her to-night."

This announcement was followed by a long, impressive pause,

An Angel of Light

"I wish *I* could see the angel," said Vernie, earnestly. "I wish he'd come up here. I would *love* to see a real, live angel."

He clapped his little hands—"Don't you hope he'll come, Vic?"

"Don't be so wicked, Vernie. If he comes he'll take Mother away, right up to Heaven, an' we'll never see her any more."

He finished with a muffled sob, and once more silence reigned. Vernon waited for his brother to speak.

"Dad's got to go to Church in the middle of the night to-night. There's going to be a service 'cause it's the last night of the year."

Vernie's mind was still running upon the angel.

"Oh, Vic, p'raps the beautiful angel 'll come while he's gone; an he won't see him."

; Vic heaved a sigh—"Vernie, you're too little to understand."

This was a speech of Betty's, but in spite of its familiarity it went home.

"I'm *not* little. I'll be six in May. Daddy says I'm *big*."

"Well then, listen to me, and don't talk about wanting to see the angel, 'cause if he comes we shall never see Mother any more as long as we live. We've got to try and help Dad to keep the angel away."

His hearer was impressed. In an awestruck whisper he inquired—

"What have we got to do, Vic?"

"*I'm* going to Church to-night," was the determined reply, "presently, ever so late, when it's eleven o'clock."

"Oo-o! Betty won't let us. Who'll dress us?"

"*You* needn't come if you're frightened of Betty, but *I'm* going; an' I'll help you get ready if you want to come."

"I *do* want to come. Vic, I *do* want to come."

The answer was discouraging—

"I don't know about it. You're rather too little to come, I think. P'raps you'd better stay in bed."

Victor had no intention of leaving his brother out of the escapade, but the superior wisdom of his eight years taught him the necessity of putting the younger boy on his mettle, lest at the last moment he should cry and attract attention.

At once Vernon was all eagerness.

"Yes, please Vic, take me. I'll be ever so quiet. Please Vickie, please *do* take me."

"I'll see. Anyway, you'd better go to sleep an' I'll stay awake to watch the time. If I'm going to take you with me I'll wake you."

"I'm going to stay awake, too," was the confident answer; but within five minutes Vernon was asleep.

Victor made a valiant struggle to keep his eyes open. Again and again he caught himself napping and redoubled his efforts, but drowsiness conquered, and when Betty looked in an hour later both the little lads were in the land of dreams.

Later still, their father softly entered the room. During the long evening he had sat by his wife's bedside, but there had been no change—she lay apparently sinking—and now he must leave her for an hour to conduct the watch-night service. He stood for a moment or two looking down at his boys; then, with a sigh, he turned away.

"Poor little chaps," was his thought. "How peaceful they look, and yet their Mother is dying."

Outside the door he met Betty.

"They're all right," he said, "fast asleep." Then, noticing the tired look in the girl's eyes, he added kindly—

"Go and get some sleep yourself, Betty. You were up all last night. You're tired out."

"I'm all right, sir, thank you."

"Well, go and have a rest and keep all right—we don't know what may be required of us all later on. Good night."

With a grateful "good night, and thank you, sir," Betty turned into her own room which adjoined that of the children, and was soon as fast asleep as they.

Meanwhile there was a stir in the next room. Victor, having his great project in mind, had slept less soundly than usual, so that his father's visit and the subsequent conversation at the door had disturbed him. The night-light's feeble beam showed the hands of the clock pointing to eleven. Vic slipped from his bed and, finding the door slightly ajar, peered out on to the dim landing and staircase, and listened. All was still.

With fast-beating heart he began to dress, having determined to be quite ready himself before he roused Vernon. It was rather a difficult matter, but at last it was accomplished, after a fashion. Then he woke his brother, and with many injunctions to silence, enforced with the threat of leaving him behind, he managed to get the child up and into his clothes.

"Now, Vernie, you've got to creep down ever so quietly; like a mouse."

"Yes," gasped the little fellow, half afraid of the adventure yet wholly proud to be his brother's companion in so daring a deed.

Vic led the way, descending the carpeted stairs without a sound. Vernon, panting with excitement, followed him, every now and then attempting to make some whispered remark but quickly awed into

silence by a frown and a warning finger. On the way they passed their mother's apartment, and through the open door could hear her struggle for breath, and see the white-capped nurse keeping vigil. Vernie stood still on the mat, hardly able to resist the temptation to go to his mother, but Vic pulled him on and put a hand over his mouth when he attempted to speak. In the hall Vic took their overcoats and caps from the stand, and in another minute the adventurers were running down the garden path, their slipper-shod feet making but little sound upon the frozen gravel.

The night was still, and intensely cold.

"Isn't it dark, Vic," said Vernon, tightening his hold upon his brother's hand.

"Yes, but look, there's heaps of stars, and I 'spect the moon's about somewhere. Come on."

The ivy-mantled tower of the Church loomed darkly before them, but a feeble beam of light showed the way to the porch, which was empty. Vic pushed open the baize-covered inner door, and ushered his brother into the nearest seat—a high, old-fashioned pew, shut in by a door and a glass screen.

The congregation were kneeling, and the children could hear their father's voice leading the prayers.

"Kneel down," said Vic, "an' don't forget it's Mother we've come to pray for."

Hunched up upon the high hassocks, the little boys buried their faces in their hands and prayed God to let their mother stay with them. Mechanically they chanted the "Amens," and, their prayers still unfinished, rose when the congregation rose; but their slight little forms were lost in the ornate pew which had accommodated many a portly squire. The hymn that followed was unfamiliar, and then came the sermon.

Sermons always seemed very long to Vic and Vernie, so they settled themselves at the end of the pew—Vic in the corner against the massive carved woodwork and Vernie leaning upon him. They heard the text given out, and then went to sleep.

The sermon came to an end; the congregation knelt while the clock in the tower chimed and tolled out the twelve strokes of midnight. Rising, they lustily sang—

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come—

the benediction was pronounced and they filed out into the churchyard to exchange New Year greetings. The Vicar came out, said "good

night" to several little groups and answered their kind inquiries after his wife. The verger, elderly and rheumatic, took but a cursory look round before putting out the lights and locking up. A little while, and the Church and its precincts were left to darkness and—the slumbering children in the squire's pew.

One o'clock, two o'clock, chimed, and then the sleepers stirred. Vernie was the first—he opened his blue eyes upon a weird scene, for the moon had risen and from the windows on one side of the building a cold white brilliance revealed the pillars and arches standing like a row of giants with outstretched arms, while on the other side the windows were black and shiny as uncovered glass always is after dark.

For a moment the little fellow sat up and looked about him, rubbing his eyes; then, seized with terror, he turned and clutched his brother with a frightened cry.

Vic was very fast asleep. He answered vaguely in a drowsy voice, and moved as if to turn in his bed, but Vernie held on to him.

"Wake up, Vic. Vickie, wake up. Vic—Vickie, *do* wake up."

He roused himself and sat up, still under the spell of heavy sleep, but one glance at his surroundings was enough. He slid to the floor, gripped Vernie's hand, opened the door of the pew and stepped out into the aisle—where white shafts of moonlight lay upon the flat old tombstones.

Vernie began to cry, but Vic, scarcely less frightened, struggled bravely to wink back the rising tears and play the part of an elder brother. Fumbling his way, he found the door by which they had entered, but it resisted his efforts to open it, although he pulled and pushed with all his might, calling upon Vernie to help. It was all to no purpose; the door was securely fastened.

"It's locked; we're shut in," he said, and immediately repented of his words, for the younger child broke out afresh into piteous crying.

Vic put his arm round him.

"Come on, Vern, don't cry. Somebody's *sure* to come in a minute."

But for a time the child was inconsolable, and Vic, despite his superior age, broke down completely and cried with him, until, suddenly recollecting his responsibility, he mastered his feelings. Then a bright thought struck him.

"Vernie, I've just remembered I've got my flash-lamp."

He produced it from his overcoat pocket, and a bright shaft of light shone round them, and Vernie forgot his fears.

"Come on," said Vic. "There's ever so many other doors; let's go an' try them. It's like the knights Mother told us about."

"What is?" asked Vernie, as, tightly clutching his brother's hand, he trotted beside him.

"Why! being shut up in the Church at night, don't you remember? Mother said they used to kneel down all night, in the dark."

"Will we have to kneel down all night, all in the dark, Vic?"

"No, of course we won't. P'raps we shall find one of the doors undone; but anyway Dad, or Betty, or old Jinks 'll come an' let us out; an' we've got a fine light."

"Ye—s—s," said Vernie, doubtfully; then, after a pause, "I wishes we were at home."

Vic wished it quite as fervently, but he only laughed to chase away his rising tears.

"It's fine *sport*, Vernie boy; but you're too little to like sport."

"I'm *not* little; I'll soon be six. I'm *not* too little to like sport."

With an injunction to "Buck up, then, an' come on," Vic quickened the pace, and the little lads followed the beam of the flash-lamp round the old Church, trying its nail-studded doors one by one, but always with the same result.

"There's still the *vestry* door," said Vic.

He spoke jauntily, but in his own mind he well knew there was no chance that way.

Vernie, on the verge of tears, clung more closely to him as they approached the heavy curtain covering the open doorway at the head of the vestry stairs, but with a quick movement Vic pushed it aside and they slowly descended the steep stone steps. On entering the vestry Vic, to make a diversion, waved his lamp above his head, turning it in all directions. From the walls the calm faces of dead and gone Rectors and Prelates gazed from their massive frames upon the scared intruders.

Vic tried the door, tried it again and again while he considered what should be his next suggestion. He himself was hardly able to choke back his tears, but when at last he turned to his brother he spoke with a laugh—

"That's locked too. Vernie, we're like the people in Jericho, all shut in an' the gates locked."

A wail arose—"I want Mummie; Vernie wants Mummie."

So did Vic, and the mention of her name brought to him the vague fear that the mysterious "Angel of Death" might already have taken her away.

"It's *for* Mummie's sake that we're here," he said. "Let's kneel down an' say our prayers again."

But Vernie was incapable of prayers. He wept aloud, lapsing into the baby talk which he was so fast outgrowing—

"I's *frightened*, an' I's *hungry*, an' Vernie wants Mummie."

At this point the flash-lamp went out, and the vestry, shut away from the moonlight, was pitch dark.

Vic cuddled his little brother to him, at the same time furtively wiping away his own tears. He had nothing to say, no comfort to offer. For the time being he was no braver than Vernie—they were just a pair of frightened little children all alone in a strange, weird place through the long hours of a winter night. Yet there was still some of the fighting spirit left in Vic; he conquered himself and proceeded to feel in his pockets.

"*Biscuits*, Vernie, and an *apple*," he exclaimed; "come on, let's sit down an' have our supper."

The oracle worked; Vernon dried his eyes.

"Where?" he asked.

"Oh, anywhere; let's feel about an' find a chair."

"But where's the biskies an' apples?"

"In my overcoat pocket. I'd forgotten them. Anything in *your* pocket?"

Vernie searched the three receptacles of which he was so proud, but produced therefrom nothing better in the way of eatables than a dry crust of bread put there for the ducks at the farm.

"Never mind," said Vic, "we shall do all right."

He pulled his brother to a chair, shared it with him, and the feast began. Vic handed out the biscuits one by one until Vernie had eaten them all, while he himself munched the crust.

"That's all," he said at last, "now there's only the apple. You shall take first bite."

A few alternate bites and that, too, was gone. Once more Vernie began to fidget.

"There's a mousie behind the wall, Vic, I hear him nibbling. Will he come out?"

He spoke in a frightened whisper; he was terrified of mice—"Isn't it dark, Vic. When will Daddy an' Betty come?"

"I don't know azackly, but *soon*."

Fretfully the child continued—"Vernie don't like the nasty dark. Vic, do you like the dark?"

"No," was the reply, "but let's go back into the big Church, an' then the mouse won't find us."

They fumbled their way back to the curtain, and, pushing it aside, passed from darkness into the radiance of a shining presence. Facing

them was a glorious figure, standing in mid air. His tall, stately form was transparent, and his flowing garments were of shining white and gold. Behind him rose two pure wings of snowy feathers, and as the wondering children gazed upon him his clear eyes seemed to look lovingly into theirs from a kind face surmounted by thick curls of deep gold above which shone a halo of paler hue. One hand grasped a standard—white, with a cross emblazoned upon it in gold, and the other hand was stretched out towards the children as if in welcome or benediction. His whole being seemed the very embodiment of strength and holiness and loving-kindness, and the fact that his feet were raised more than a yard above the floor level made his stature appear even greater than it really was.

"The *Angel*," cried Vernie delightedly, as, releasing his brother's hand, he ran eagerly forward along the path of moonlight which lay across the chancel as if it were a trailing drapery from the Angel's shining robe.

Vic followed and took hold of the child.

"Hush," he said, "it's the Angel that was coming for Mother. He's come to take care of us instead."

They paused, standing side by side, their faces lighted by the soft radiance from the beautiful stained glass panel in which the Angel was the one and only figure. To them the vision was not a narrow window presented in memory of a departed parishioner, but an aperture miraculously made in the solid wall by the very hand of God in order that an Angel, in all his shining loveliness, might watch over and protect two lonely little boys.

"Has he come straight from Heaven?" whispered Vernie.

"Yes," said Vic. Then, moved by a sudden impulse, he knelt and drew his brother down beside him. "Let us say our prayers," he said.

"What shall we say, Vic?"

Without reply Victor prayed aloud—

"Please, O God, we're *so* glad to have the beautiful Angel to take care of us. Please send one just as bright an' shining to take care of Mother, 'cause she's very, very ill, an' Father says the Angel of Death may come an' take her away. But *we* want her, O God; please let her stay with us 'cause we love her more than—more than—more than a thousand. Please let the Angel stay with Vernie an' me till Father comes, or Betty, or somebody. For Christ's sake. Amen."

"Amen," responded Vernie.

They rose from their knees and drew a little nearer to their "protector." Just in front of them were two broad steps leading into the side chapel, and in the chapel, just to the left of the steps, a low seat

of carved oak intended for two clergy. Here the children sat down, silently gazing with almost adoring eyes upon the Angel—whose countenance, in the variable moonlight, seemed now and again to alter in expression and to light up with a smile as if indeed it were a living face.

All fear was gone. The little boys were no longer lonely, but happy with a sense of safety and companionship, for not only did the presence of the Angel seem to shed light upon them but warmth also, there being, unnoticed by them, a heat-radiator close by where they sat. Each with his arm about the other, they waited in the care of the Angel for the coming of some deliverer—and, for the time being, that deliverer was sleep. Gradually, lulled by the pleasant warmth, drowsiness stole over them, the presence of their heaven-sent protector became more and more real to their minds, and they fell into a deep, untroubled slumber.

Meanwhile, the Angel of Death, who for many days and nights had hovered over the Vicarage, spread his wings and went his way—leaving the wife and mother to return to health and strength. Contrary to all expectations the crisis of her illness passed safely, and, like her children, she fell into a dreamless and refreshing sleep.

The Church clock was striking six when, having sat long by her bedside while she slept, her husband left her, to seek a little rest for himself. He had had many anxious days and sleepless nights and was very tired, but weariness was lost in happiness, and before retiring to his room he stepped out into the garden. Beyond the hedge rose the Church, and with an involuntary desire to express the joy and thankfulness surging within him the Vicar made his way thither and let himself in with his vestry key.

He, too, had a pocket-torch, and by its light he passed across the chancel, intending to offer his thanks in the side chapel. The moonlight had left the sanctuary, and for him there was no vision of a glorious Angel, but his torch revealed two little children, locked in each other's arms and fast asleep. Scarcely could he believe his eyes—how came it that the little lads who, when he had visited them at close upon eleven o'clock, were warmly tucked in their beds, were now in the locked and deserted Church, alone and unafraid? How could it be? How had they come there?

Shading his torch lest its light should awaken them suddenly, he bent down and kissed them, quietly addressing them each by name and telling them it was time to wake up.

At first they paid no heed, so deep was their sleep; but little by little they roused sufficiently to realise that their father was with them,

and with a cry of joy they sprang up, putting their arms round his neck.

Realising that it was not the time to ask for explanations, he gathered them to him, and with tears of joy told them that their Mother had taken a turn for the better and was going to live and get well again.

"We knew it, Father," said Vic earnestly, "'cause the Angel you spoke about stayed with *us* and took care of *us*, instead of fetching Mother away."

He turned and pointed towards the window as he spoke, but it was dark and the Angel had disappeared.

"He's gone now you've come," he added.

"He was all white an' gold an' shiny bright," said Vernie. "*God* sent him."

"Yes," replied their father, "and now, before we go home to breakfast, we'll kneel down together and thank God for His goodness to us during this night—for creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life."

Putting Jamie Away

Why Mary Campbell Changed Her Mind About It

BY J. MONTEATH CURRIE

THE idiot boy sat at the fire and blinked his pale blue eyes weakly towards the blaze. Suddenly he gave a harsh, unexpected chuckle, causing his stepmother, who was laying the table for tea, to start nervously, while a frown spread over her comely face.

"No wonder I'm nervous," she said, turning to her son, a handsome lad about seventeen, who was seated at the window paring an apple. "I was a fool to marry again, when I might have been content with you, especially to a man who had an idiot son; for what I've stood these last eight years no one can tell. It's easy for them that's got no nerves; but I'm so sensitive, the least thing goes through me."

"When is Aunt Phemie coming for him?" asked Davie, handing the apple to his step-brother.

"She'll be here to-night, but will not be leaving till the day after to-morrow. I have his box all packed—shirts and socks, all my own making. Nobody can say I haven't done my duty. I wish it was past, though, for father will not settle till he's gone."

"I see that," said Davie, looking sympathetically at his step-brother. "He hardly ate any dinner, and I saw him wiping his eyes out in the stable."

"Maybe it was the chaff that got into them," suggested the mother.

"No," said the boy, "it wasn't that. He was crying, mother. Do you not think it's a pity putting Jamie away? Aunt Phemie looks real stern. I don't think she'll be kind to him."

"Davie, you make me angry," cried Mrs. Campbell impatiently. "Aunt Phemie's terribly clever, and will have time to bestow on Jamie that I never had. Besides, the money that father will give for

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his board will be a help to her. Jamie will not annoy her as he does me. She never had any nerves."

"But see how father's vexing himself," persisted Davie.

"Tuts! He's maybe putting it on a bit, just trying to get his own way. But I'm not going to give in. Aunt Phemie said to me before I was married, 'Never you give in to your husband.'"

Davie sighed, and rising, let in the collie dog that was scraping at the door. It walked straight up to the idiot boy and poked its cold nose into his hand, as if it understood him better than man did. Jamie turned round, like one awakened from some dream, laughed, and stroked the dog's head; then, seizing a small cake from the plate on the table, he pushed it into the creature's mouth.

"Do you see that?" cried Mrs. Campbell angrily, and rushing forward, gave Jamie's hand a smart slap. "The fine cakes I baked for father thrown away on a dog. I'm sure, Davie, you see how I'm exasperated."

Jamie winced, and, raising his shoulders in self-defence, drew his chair against the fender with a scared look on his face.

"Mother, I'm sure you might have had patience with him when he's going so soon. He doesn't mean any harm. Come, Jamie," said Davie, taking his hand, "we'll go out and see the bonnie clouds skimming across the sky."

Left alone, Mary Campbell rearranged the plates, then went into the kitchen and infused the tea.

"No wonder I'm angry," she thought; "after sweating myself over the oven baking these cakes, all to see them thrown to the dog. It's bad enough in any circumstances standing a stepbairn, but it's unbearable when he's an idiot. He's for no earthly use."

Heavy steps were heard approaching the back door, then the farmer entered. He came in wearily, and, taking a towel from the back of a door, wiped his sun-reddened face. Then he passed into the sitting-room without a word and sat down at the table, where his wife joined him.

"Where's Jamie?" he asked, as Mrs. Campbell poured out the tea.

"Davie took him out a minute ago. They'll be in directly."

The farmer took up a scone, turned it over once or twice, then put it back on the plate.

"I can't say I feel hungry the day," he said. "I'll just drink the tea, I think."

"James!" Mary Campbell's voice was irritable. "Don't be senseless, man. Didn't you agree to let the boy go? Try to look things straight in the face. If Jamie was took away from you by

death, you might act that way. But he's going to a good home, where he'll be properly looked after. You should think of me. I'm just a bundle of nerves through watching him, frightened he'll get burnt or drowned. There's that deep well at the other side of the river. Now, if he was to go there, who could see him? You cannot tell what might happen if he was left here."

The farmer sighed and drained the last dregs of his tea.

"There are some things worse than death," he said solemnly.

"Now, that's unkind," said his wife pettishly, as she pressed the butter viciously into her bread. "After all I've done, as if he were my very own; and it was harder on me, knowing he was for no use."

"You think your Maker so senseless, then, as to make anything useless? It cannot be to pass His time, seeing time is nothing to Him."

"Well, you see for yourself that he is useless," persisted Mary.

"I tell you, woman," said the farmer, with unusual courage, "we maybe don't see it, but there's nothing created without a purpose. Maybe a weak chap like Jamie is made to soften our hearts, and that's not an easy job sometimes."

Mary laughed scoffingly.

"Sentimental nonsense!" she cried. "I haven't time for thinking things like that. If you had five cows to milk, and butter to make, and the house to clean, and the pigs to feed, and a hundred other things to do, you'd need your heart made rather harder than softer."

At this moment Davie and his brother entered. Mr. Campbell made room for Jamie beside him, patting him kindly on the back. The boy smiled broadly, threw back his head, and gave a sharp inarticulate sound. The father nodded comprehendingly, placed a well-buttered scone on his plate and, turning to Davie, said—

"Davie, you'll need to cart sand from the sandy hole the morn. We must try and improve the soil in the west field. It's far too clayey yet."

"I was planning to take Jamie for a walk"—the lad hesitated—"for the last time," he added.

"That was kind of you, Davie; but Jock has to bring the coals from the station, and my rheumatism's not better yet. Jamie will be all right. Be sure you're careful not to undermine the bank."

"There's no fears," said Davie, spreading himself another scone. "That hole can stand a lot more digging. The sandy hole up by Jones's has dug twice as deep, and the bank has hung over it like a

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roof this twelve-month. I just saw it yesterday. Some tinkers had been making a fire below it."

"That may be; but mind, it's the last straw that breaks the camel's back." The farmer rose and stretched himself, then looked at the clock on the mantelpiece. "It'll be about time I was yoking the horse," he said, addressing his wife. "What time did you say Phemie was coming?"

"A quarter to six. Ay, you'll need to hurry. Just change your coat and put on a collar. Mind, you were late the last time Phemie came, so don't stand clatterin' again with anybody on the road."

About seven in the evening Aunt Phemie arrived at the farm. She was tall and angular, with reddish hair, and a long upper lip. Her entrance was noisy, as she spouted out a whole year's gossip. All the chairs seemed to be pushed aside for her convenience. At last she showed a preference for the one on which Jamie was seated.

"Here, get out of that, and make room for your betters," she cried with a forced laugh, and, pulling the boy's ear, drew him from the seat.

Jamie gave a loud shriek and disappeared under the table. There was no one near to take his part save Mrs. Campbell, and she was afraid to offend her sister.

"Pull him out this instant, Mary," cried Aunt Phemie. "It is a dog-like instinct. You should have checked that at the beginning."

Mary Campbell obediently drew the frightened boy out by main force.

"There now, sit quiet," she whispered, pushing him to a chair near the door. "I hope you will not be hard on him, Phemie." She looked timidly at her sister, who had one of those masterful natures before which the weak are continually cringing. "Be good to him for my sake. It hurts me to think of any suffering."

Phemie fixed her stony eye on Mary.

"Mercy me!" she cried, turning up her eyes. "Did I ever hurt a living thing? Isn't it my whole life's object to benefit the human race? Just you wait and see how I'll improve him. I always knew I had a gift for teaching. I should have been educated for the deaf and dumb. There's nothing like discipline and firmness. Sacrifice your feelings. I have a grand idea which may bring me my fortune yet. What would you say if, in another year or so, I had a whole house full of idiots like him?"

"God forbid!" blurted out Mary with a horrified expression.

"In training, of course," put in Phemie, but changed her tone suddenly as James Campbell entered the room. "Ay, I was just

saying to Mary that Jamie, *puir laddie*, is looking a bit pinched-like," she said tenderly. "He's needing the change and good attention. I've got every comfort ready for him. You remember the rag rug I made, Mary, that's been in front of my bed these last six years—well, I've put it in front of Jamie's. I've also ordered a whole stone of oatmeal, and a large salt cod, as there's nothing like phosphates for building up the brain. Mercy me! You and Mary have no time to do justice to him."

"His stomach will maybe not stand the salt fish, Phemie. The body is delicate as well as the mind," the father ventured.

"Just keep your mind easy, James," said Phemie sweetly. "I've been studying a book on mental diseases till I've about got it by heart. There is nothing like examining a thing to the very root. I flatter myself I've got an original idea. Just you wait and see how improved he'll be."

"I hope so," said the farmer, but he did not look very confident.

As for his wife, a suspicion which she had tried in vain to suppress, thrust itself again into her mind. There had been no definite arrangement regarding Jamie's board. Her sister had always put aside any suggestion that a sum should be fixed as a matter too trifling to be considered. But Mary knew Phemie's grasping nature, yet had not the courage to oppose her, having all her life given in to her stronger will. And her husband was one of those peace-loving men who would rather die than cause stormy words.

All that night the farmer's wife tossed on her bed. She had thought to ease herself by putting Jamie out of her sight, and had hailed Phemie's suggestion. Now she wished she had let things be as they were. If anything happened to Jamie, would not her conscience trouble her for ever? It was impossible to sleep. She turned on her other side, and saw Jamie's cowering form under the table. Was it not possible that the memory of that pale innocent face might sting her even more than his actual presence? But it was too late now to thwart Phemie's will.

The next day she thought to lessen her pain by avoiding Jamie. She refrained from searching for eggs in the barn, as she heard his voice muttering within. Her husband, doubtless influenced by the same feeling, absented himself from the steading all the morning. In the afternoon her nerves got the better of her. Her sister had been talking of corpses and funerals, and of the necessity of having a death-shirt for each member of the household reserved carefully in a drawer, till Mary imagined her whole family, herself included, stretched white and stiff upon their beds.

At last she rose up desperately, and, making an excuse, went out of the house. What if anything ghastly should happen to Jamie while he was still under her charge, and hurt her peculiarly sensitive nature? She would take a look for him about the place.

The fresh air somewhat revived her trembling nerves. "Perhaps he is with Davie," she thought, when she could not see him in any of his haunts. So she opened a gate and went down the track, by the side of a hedge that led to the sandy hole.

The late October day had been breezy at times, with bright bursts of sunshine at intervals. Now crushed heaps of clouds lay round the horizon—the clouds which Jamie loved and spoke to in a language all his own.

Mary's anxiety for Jamie quickly changed to anger, perhaps because she was tired, having worked since early morning. What a trouble he caused her! After all, it was only natural she should wish him away. He filled such a large place in her husband's affections, besides giving the neighbours a reason for sneering at them. It was only her too sensitive nature that stirred her conscience at times. But she would not be a simpleton. If she could meet the boy at the present moment, what a hard tingling slap she would give him, which would cause his pale cheek to flush a deep pink. Yet she thought herself the most kind and tender-hearted of women.

"I believe Phemie is right," she muttered. "I am too thoughtful for others; I should think more of myself. But then, she never was a mother. It makes one's heart big for anything."

She had come within sight of the hazel-knoll, at the other side of which, at the foot of a steep incline, lay the sandy hole. A flock of crows, flying low overhead, gave out their solemn, hoarse caws.

"I wonder I haven't met Davie," she thought; "he should have been coming back with his cart by this time."

An unusually nervous feeling came over her. She remembered how her husband had warned Davie not to dig too deep. A cold sweat came out on her brow. What if anything had happened to Davie!

With beating heart she hastened her steps; then her fears abated, the muscles of her face relaxed. She heard a living sound, the pawing movements of the horse and the rattle of its harness.

With a new spring of step she rounded the corner of the knoll, and went down by the side of the bank. Her feet sank deep in the dry sand. She faced the horse that was raising and ducking his head impatiently under an unusual load. Mary gasped and stared in bewilderment. God help her! Where was the cart? Behind the

animal, burying the cart from view, was a great hill of sand. The bank had fallen—and Davie——

A shriek of direst agony rent the air as the mother fell on her knees by the sandpit. A bevy of sparrows flew like a wind from the bushes. The horse stopped its struggling, and looked round at the woman, a tender feeling in its soft brown eyes.

Then the mother, springing up, tore at the earth, scattering it wildly, in a vain effort to save her son. Dig! She must dig with all her life's energy. Every moment was of value when her dear and only son was smothering under that mountain of sand.

The blessing of unconsciousness, as yet, was not for her. With her over-sensitive nature, she imagined all he must be suffering, and felt the same. She was choking with the vile sand in her mouth. She died a hundred deaths. Instead of praying in this her greatest extremity, she blasphemously accused God of injustice and malice. It was His revenge for her intention of putting Jamie away. Who could talk of the Almighty now as a God of Wisdom? Had not he killed the best and cleverest of lads, and preserved a useless idiot to torment her existence?

Still she tore furiously at the sand, trying to uncover the cart, every little while giving vent to a loud scream. But what were her efforts? More and more sand flowed down, filling up the hollows as soon as made. Half-blinded, and with finger-tips bleeding, she struggled panting. It was a war between the inanimate and the human nature. Her screams grew fainter. A buzzing sound came into her head. Her limbs grew paralysed. She fell senseless at the horse's feet.

Davie was fond of the farm-work. To drive a horse, sitting in front of the cart, feeling the fresh smell of the earth and herbage, was simply a delight to him. But this afternoon, when for the fifth time he drove for the sand, nature had no pleasure for him. A sorrow which had never been there before lay on his heart. To-night, most likely, would be the last time he would see Jamie sitting by the fireside, for he felt sure that the delicate boy would not live long under the restraints of the town and Aunt Phemie's rule. He would never again bring home to him the blackest brambles, or crack the hazel nuts for him; and over the precipice by the river where the blackthorns grew, he need not trouble any more to swing himself over, holding on to the broom brush, to pull the purple sloes, the biggest ever seen.

Usually the sandpit had a special attraction to Davie. From

Putting Jamie Away

there, when he stood up on the cart, he could see the Duncans' farm at the other side of the river, and perhaps catch a glimpse of pretty Minnie hanging out the washing on the green. He had had many tender thoughts of the girl, and had actually urged her, for Jamie's sake, to ask her father to cover over the deep well in the meadow. Imagining the solicitude for herself, a lovely blush had come to her cheeks, the thought of which made the smile ripple round Davie's mouth at the most inappropriate times.

Even to-day, in spite of his depression, he stood on the cart, when it was half-full of sand, and gazed across the river. But Minnie was not in sight, unless—his heart beat anxiously—could that be she beside the well? A figure was stretched out on its verge, gazing down into the water. A slight change of position in the person, and a glimpse of a red cap, caused Davie to leap from the cart and run wildly towards the bridge some distance down the river.

The girl was forgotten, only Jamie and danger filled his mind. He dared not shout, lest the fright should make the boy fall in, and the river was too swift at that part to swim over.

Was it possible that Jamie had wandered there to escape from Aunt Phemie? Had some gleam of intelligence told him that not till after death could his poor mind be made right; that this well would prove an entrance into that city where nobody could ever pull his ear, or treat him unkindly?

Davie was in time. The boy still lay on the brink, his arm stretched out over the water, dabbling it lovingly with his fingers. Stealthily Davie came up to him, hardly making a sound; another step, and he had reached him.

"Jamie, laddie!" he cried, catching him in his arms.

He led the boy back the way he had come. In the distance he saw his father hurrying down the field towards the sandy hole. Just as the farmer turned the corner of the sandpit, Davie overtook him with Jamie.

"Thank God, you're safe!" cried the father. "I was frightened that something had happened to you. I thought I heard screaming."

Davie explained the circumstance, and they walked forward. Suddenly both stopped.

"Heaven help me! What's this?" cried the farmer aghast.

Early next morning the father and Davie sat by the bed on which lay Mary Campbell. A tender expression was on her face as she held her son's hand.

"I did not deserve this," she said, with a sob in her voice; "for oh! what wild thoughts I had—and——"

"Hush! Don't excite yourself, dearie. It was natural," said her husband. "Just you lie quiet."

"But—but I spoke ill of the Almighty, and blamed Him for taking Davie, and sparin' Jamie, who, I thought, was for no use. For no use! My! if Jamie hadn't been there, Davie would have been killed; and it was a place I never knew him to go to before."

"That's a fact," said the farmer solemnly.

At this moment Aunt Phemie entered, dressed for travelling.

"It's time you were yoking the horse, James," she said. "Me and Jamie are both ready to start. Mary, you've got a fright, no doubt; but you'll feel better when you get up. It doesn't do to pamper yourself."

Mary jumped up in bed.

"Bring Jamie in this minute," she cried excitedly. "He's not going one step, I tell you. Do you think I would ever part with him now after saving Davie?"

The farmer pressed his wife's hand.

"We're much obliged to Phemie all the same," he said, evading that angry woman's eye. "Now I'll better be yoking the horse, not to hinder her."

The Christmas Highwayman

Cousin Cynthia's Strange Adventure

BY ETHEL TALBOT

I

"I FEAR me Cousin Cynthia will find her stay here mighty dull!"

The speaker was a girl of about fifteen years of age. She stood, her brow puckered with anxiety, facing the big oak-beamed living-room of her father's country home.

Behind her, on an open hearth, roared a huge fire of logs which, by its dancing light, showed up her slender form in its short waisted gown with its simple white fichu at the neck. She wore a pink ribbon in her hair, a sprig of holly at her breast, and her feet, in their little sandalled slippers, tapped anxiously on the great bear-skin rug.

"I fear me——," she began again in a worried tone.

"'Tis a faint heart, sister Nan, that never rejoices," rejoined a gay young voice. "One might guess that a calamity had fallen, and 'tis but that your greatest wish in all the world has come true!" The speaker's eyes twinkled. He looked up from the great couch on which he was lazily stretched, reading by the light of a candle at his side. "Is that not so?" he asked. "Or is it that you are repenting already of the coming of our Cousin Cynthia!"

"Sure, 'tis her letter, Dick. Or perhaps it may be my own mistake. Still, by the tone on't, it seems to me that Cousin Cynthia it is who is already repenting herself of the pleasures and the junkettings she will miss in Town by coming to us, this Yule-tide. See, she writes—I will read it aloud—

'I am sure, dear Cousin, that you would be vastly tickled were I to send you a list of the goings-on which I shall miss this Xmas-tide by coming to you. A ball at St. James's to which I might have worn my newest gown; a masquerade which, in itself, my dear Nan, is an excitement indeed. Then my Lady Cyrtis would have included me, so I hear, in her list of guests for dinner on Xmas Day. And so on, I could write for ever; but more anon, when we meet. My

father is anxious that nothing shall stand in the way of this my first visit to you, and I, myself, am willing to give up the excitements of Town, knowing that an account of them, in itself, will surely be a treat indeed to such a country-bred mouse as yourself ! ”

“ In very truth ! ” shouted Dick, jumping up impetuously and interrupting her. “ ’Tis the letter of a maid who fancies herself finely. A spoiled miss ! Excitement, forsooth ! Give *me* the ‘ maiden of *bashful* fifteen ! ’ ” Dick bowed towards his sister, with a brotherly and affectionate grin.

“ Cousin Cynthia is seventeen years of age, Dick,” Nan corrected him ; “ and has gone into society early.”

“ La, Dick, hold thine idle tongue there,” added his father, the Squire. The old gentleman was seated in his great elbow-chair by the fireside with a pointer at his feet. His high cravat matched in snowy whiteness his silver hair, and his handsome weather-beaten features glowed with geniality.

“ ’Tis but a maid she is, with a maid’s whimsies, thy Cousin Cynthia. She will be ill to please, indeed, if we do not please her here on Christmas-tide. Why, ’tis a jolly time indeed ! ” The old Squire broke forth into a scrap of song :—

Now Christmas is come,
Let us beat up the drum
And call all our neighbours together !
And when they appear
Let us make such good cheer
As will keep out the wind and the weather !
Tol-de-rol !

finished up the cheery old gentleman. “ What more could she want, your Cousin Cynthia ! A maiden whose birthday is but two years ahead of your own, daughter Nan. Banish that frown ! ”

“ ’Tis excitement that she wishes,” sighed Nan. “ Oh, I had not thought of that when I wrote as you directed me. She says in the letter, too, which the post-boy has just brought, that she fears to find the country dull.”

“ The country—DULL ! ” repeated the Squire staring.

“ And that I must forgive her if she suffers from the vapours here ! ” finished up Nan sadly.

“ The VAPOURS ! ” repeated the Squire.

“ ’Tis as Nan says,” broke in an elderly little lady, seated on the opposite side of the hearth. “ The maiden is a veritable town-miss ! I warrant ’twould have been better to ask her here in the summer-time. ’Tis but poor hospitality to invite her at this time of year. Muddy roads ! Lumbering wheels ! Perhaps a chill or worse. ’Tis certain that

our welcome of your niece and her aunt will be warm enough ; but the greeting will be the only warm thing she can expect at this time of year." Nan's governess and chaperone—a gloomy lady who had taken up office in the Squire's house at the death of his Lady and who was still bewailing the lost joys of London—sighed as she stopped for breath and took up her embroidery frame.

"Indeed, Madam, but you forget the Yule log!" laughed the Squire.

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a servant to put fresh wood on the fire. His face looked graver than should be, in the opinion of the Squire—to-morrow being Xmas Eve and preparations for the revels already being in full swing below stairs. "Hey, Joseph," inquired his master. "Hast seen the Ghost of Christmas-tide?"

"Yes, what ails you, Joseph?" inquired Mistress Pomeroy.

"Your pardon, sir. Strange news, Madam." Joseph stood erect. Old servant as he was, he took an interest in everything connected with the family which he served. "The post-boy brought ill news. The Wee Highwayman is at his dark doings again. The coach was held up last night 'twixt Berwick and Gretna. 'Twas the Wee Highwayman, himself!"

"Ill news indeed!" agreed the Squire, his jolly face looking grave.

Mistress Pomeroy dropped her embroidery frame, and stared aghast while Nan turned pale.

"Father, tell me, Cousin Cynthia is already on the road. Is there danger for her from this?"

"Tush, maidie, no danger at all! Why, 'tis a border-highwayman that the Wee Robber is. And your cousin travels by the London Road. She will see naught of him. The fellow was noised abroad these ten years back on account of his fierce doings; but the countryside has seen naught of him for eight years or more. Nor missed him, save with relief! But 'tis ill tidings for those whom it may concern, be he back again! No, thy cousin will travel soft, and be with us to-morrow night for the lighting of the Yule log. I warrant she has seen nothing of the like at her routs and junkettings."

But Nan's face looked sober; she did not recover her spirits until the end of the evening. All through the evening meal, during which she sat at her father's right hand, cracking his nuts and peeling an apple for him, Nan was quiet and thoughtful.

Her brother Dick, generally wild and full of quips and jokes, was quieter too. His eyes were on his sister, and he seemed to be thinking deeply.

"Art dreaming, Nan?" he asked her affectionately, as he lighted

her candle at bed-time. "Art dreaming of what to-morrow will bring?"

"In truth, Dick, I am more than troubled that Cynthia should be taking this long journey for so little—as 'twill seem to her. To my father, and to us, the Yule-tide celebrations seem greater, no doubt, than will they to a town-bred miss accustomed to the excitement of routs and balls!"

"'Tis excitement, then, maidie, that you wish for her?" queried her brother.

"'Twas—excitement, I fear me, brother, that *she* wished—that she wishes. And that we cannot offer."

A smile spread over Dick's jolly features. "Then, rest assured, sweet Nan, that she shall have that which she craves. Wilt trust me that much without question? If that will satisfy you——" He handed Nan her candle with a bow. "Sleep well, chuck, and greet me with a smile to-morrow," he said gaily; "I have agreed to ride with my friend Purves, on the morrow, and shall not see you again till the evening. Good-night, sister mine!"

"Good-night, good brother!" Nan smiled for the first time since the reading of Cynthia's letter. Dick and she were inseparable friends, and she knew he would be as good as his word. She entered her bed-chamber, kissing her hand to him before she closed the door, and even found herself humming the Squire's ditty as she unbound her hair:—

Now Christmas is come,
Let us beat up the drum,
And call all our neighbours together——

"But I am vastly relieved," she thought, as she dropped off to sleep between the lavender-scented sheets of the great four-poster bed, "that the Wee Highwayman be a Border pest, only; and that my cousin will be travelling safely on the London Road!"

II

"Lud, sir, 'tis a tale I fear to hear!"

Thus spoke Mistress Frazer. Closely hooded, wrapped up to the ears, she sat back on the hard seat of the stage-coach, her niece by her side. "Sir, you say that the Wee Highwayman of other days is at his black doings again!"

"Aunt! Aunt! Would that we were back in London! Would that we had not stirred from home." Cynthia's voice trembled.

She, too, was closely hooded, but the face which peered out of the dark coverings wore a piquante and pretty if rather a pettish expres-

sion. Her lips were clenched tight, though, as she listened to the tale of a stranger opposite. And her hands clasped tightly a big card-covered box which rested on her knee. "Aunt," she repeated, "Oh, I like it not. Can we not return home?"

"Oh, la—la! My dearest love! But we have come within but a mile or so of your uncle's home," replied her aunt soothingly. "We shall soon be at the last stage of your journey. Your uncle will send his own family coach to meet us at the next inn, and to convey us thence. There can be no fear of the Wee Highwayman!"

"Rest assured, fair maiden." The stranger leaned forward. "'Twas an ill-chance that led me to report such foolish tattle at such a time, egad! But one wearies of coach-riding, and I had thought to beguile a weary hour for you. 'Twas but gossip from the last stage, and may mean naught. And, in truth, 'twere well to remember that the Wee Highwayman is but a Border robber. He will not trouble us on the London Highway. It is far from his haunts."

"You are vastly thoughtful to endeavour to relieve me, sir," shivered Cynthia with a little sob. Then she turned to her aunt. "But oh, I would we had not come," she said. Then, as the coach suddenly stopped with a jerk, she gave a terrified scream.

"Aunt—the Wee Highwayman!"

"Lud, my dear. We have reached the inn. Where are your eyes! Let us collect our belongings without delay." Her aunt rose hastily.

She stepped down as she spoke, and, followed by her niece, hurried into the inn. There they accepted the polite invitation of the bustling landlady to partake of a dish of tea in a private room before proceeding farther.

"The Squire's own coach awaits you, Madam," she said; "and will be at the door when you desire to continue your drive."

"Oh, I would we were safe there," sighed Cynthia as they climbed into the big roomy equipage. "I die with fatigue, I like not this travelling." Then she sank down on the leather seat, still holding her box, and listened to the cracking of the coachman's whip as he jolted them over the rough roads, while her aunt fell into an uneasy doze.

"Stand and deliver! Your money or your life!" Was it a dream! Had Cynthia, herself, been dozing she wondered, as she sat up, shaking with terror, and screamed.

But the coach had pulled up suddenly, and it was true! Yes, quite true. There, framed in the open window was the face of—yes, it must be!—the Wee Highwayman, himself!

"I am, indeed, sorry to disturb you, ladies!" he remarked suavely,

"but it behoves you to obey my requests. Will you hand over to me your valuables?"

Valuables! Mistress Frazer, now wide awake, uttered a shriek. Her notes were sewn safely into her corsage, as she knew; her gold was in her stockings. Only a few silver pieces, retained for wayside expenses, still remained in her travelling wallet. These, with trembling hands, she handed out.

"Tush! What is silver to the Wee Highwayman! Out with your jewels!" The masked stranger returned the purse, as though in scorn.

"My aunt has left her jewels behind," faltered Cynthia. "Oh, pity us. Leave us." She was shivering; but her slender hands still clasped firmly the cardboard box in which her new frock lay carefully folded.

"Coachman! Come to our relief! Prithee hear me! Or art thou killed? Art naught of a man, you white-livered coward, to leave us to the mercy of cut-throats!" screamed Mistress Frazer.

"Pardon, Madam." It was the Wee Highwayman. "The coachman is unable to relieve you. Blame him not. He is under cover of my friend's pistol. And cut-throats—ah! Madam!—never indeed! In fact, I am willing to take the word of a lady, and to believe that you are travelling without jewellery as you say. But——" he looked at Cynthia, "I must insist,"—he held out his hand for the cardboard box.

"OH! My newest gown!" sobbed Cynthia.

"There are ladies, fair maiden, whose beauty is as great, perhaps the greater, for being unadorned. But—perhaps you are a town maiden and have still that wisdom to learn!" The voice of the highwayman was clear and cool and cutting.

"Insolence! Give it back!" sobbed Cynthia.

But the box was already disappearing through the window. The robber lifted his hat and was gone, with the box under his arm as he galloped away down the hard, frosty road.

"Heaven preserve us!" sobbed Mistress Frazer.

"And he has taken my frock! Much good may it do him!" wept Cynthia angrily. "But he believed my word. Aunt—it was well that he asked for jewels, and not for gold."

"And such a thin stripling! He is well named the Wee Highwayman! OH!"

"Mistress!" It was the coachman at the carriage door. His face seemed contorted. "Will I be driving on? 'Tis gone—the Wee Robber!"

"Oh, on! On! With the greatest haste!" cried Cynthia. "Are you not injured?"

"No, my lady. But the second one, he stood over me. And I could not——"

"Oh, forbear standing there. Drive on, man," entreated Mistress Frazer, still shivering with fear.

III

"The preposterous villains! Monstrous, upon my word!" roared the Squire, his face nearly as red as his claret-coloured coat. "Within a mile of my gates; within my own lands! The scoundrels! But they shall suffer for this. Would I had sent down old Trelawny to meet you at the inn. But I thought not that such fears were abroad. And I sent Hal, the under-groom—— Had I but guessed—— These villains of the road fear nothing. They seem to be allied with the Evil One, himself. Sister, permit me!" he assisted the elder of the trembling travellers through the great hall towards the huge fire which awaited their arrival, leaving Cynthia to the care of his daughter and her governess.

"Cousin! Cousin!" cried Nan putting her arms impulsively round Cynthia's neck, and forgetting, in the excitement of hearing the terrible news, all her fear of the haughty London miss.

"I go to order a hot cordial. Perhaps a posset——! You may have taken your deaths, exposed on a bitter night—open windows; highwaymen—Losh! these terrible times!" With a rattling of her great chatelaine, Miss Pomeroy was off, forgetting her own woes in those of the new arrivals.

"Take no heed of me, I am over-strung," sobbed Cynthia in Nan's arms, all her grand lady ways forgotten.

"My poor cousin! my poor chuck!" cooed Nan, encircling her with her arms as she proceeded to lead her, herself, up to the guest-chamber which was in readiness for her. "But we have thee safe now; and the ruffians shall be punished, never fear."

So it was arm-within-arm that the two girls descended the broad stairway, at last, to see Dick in the hall below. He advanced to meet his cousin with a courtly, if rather too ceremonious, a bow.

"I am happy to greet you, cousin. And trust that you may not be dull with us!" he remarked in rather a frigid tone.

"Dull, forsooth! Have you not heard, brother, of all that befell them by the way?" cried Nan.

"Why, to be sure. Hal, the under-groom is full of it," replied

Dick. "He can speak of nothing else. Believe me, I know all that you can tell me. But hasten, my father bids you come. The Yule log is to be lighted. Hobbs is bringing it up the drive now."

"Yes, come then, cousin mine. Come out to the front portico. If you be not too weary," cried Nan. "And welcome in the Yule."

On the topmost step leading to the front door stood the Squire, bareheaded, as was his custom on Xmas Eve. Up the drive, dragging the great log behind them, came several of the house servants, singing lustily as they came.

"Yule! Yule! Welcome Yule!" called the Squire from his stand; then he himself led the way towards the great hearth-stone from which all the wood had been removed except for one small half-charred log which still burned merrily there.

"'Tis the last 'clog' of last year's Yule log, cousin," whispered Nan shyly. "We light this year's log from it. It—links the years together—and—our hearts, methinks. But—perhaps you scorn our simple ways," she added. "To me, and to us all—to my father, the most perhaps—the lighting of our Yule-tide log is a beautiful time."

"But it must burn all night," added Dick with a grin; "for if it should go out, there would be ill-luck to follow!"

"Ill-luck, forsooth! Who dare mention it!" cried the jovial Squire, and with a lady on either arm he started the Yule-tide song:—

Come, bring with a noise,
My merrie, merrie boys
The Xmas log to the firing——.

while all the servants, gathered round, shouted lustily, and the ladies smilingly tapped out the time with their fans.

"Oh, but this is passing beautiful!" cried Cynthia. "'Tis to me like the days of Faery, of which I have read. 'Tis like a beautiful fairy tale!" Her eyes were sparkling and moist, and her hands were clasped. "Oh," she exclaimed impulsively, "why did I mizzle and mump at coming here to the country——" Then she blushing stopped herself short. "La! la!" she cried, shyly; "Cousin Nan, believe me, I am downright glad to be here. Pray forget those words of mine."

"No. Why, I feared 'twas so," said simple Nan, gently. "But, if you will enjoy our country pleasures—as my wise father was quite sure that you would—we shall be happy, indeed. Truly, it had been the wish of my heart to have you here with us!"

But Cynthia was as downright as her country cousin. If her upbringing had been different they were chips of the same sound old family tree. "A thousand pardons," she cried. "I, in my ignorance,

thought of the country as a land of damps and dreariness. And my letter—— Forgive it. I knew not of these beautiful old-time ways, these——” she looked round the oak-beamed hall, and slipped one hand into the Squire’s big palm.

“Forgive me, uncle,” she said. “I was unduly pettish when I wrote the note to my cousin, and deserve little of your kindness. But perhaps the air of St. James’s breeds discontent and love of excitement.”

“Rightly spoken, maidie,” cried the Squire heartily, smiling down at her pretty upturned face.

“Ah, Dick. Now you will not need to supply the excitement which you offered,” dimpled Nan. “Since our cousin is sweetly content to be happy in our way.”

“And so I am, as I vow and confess——” said Cynthia.

“I fear me——” began Dick, in such a loud clear tone that the family turned to him. “I fear me that I, myself, have a confession to add to that of my cousin from London. I was anxious, having read our cousin’s letter, to provide her with the excitement which she craved, and I thought me of a manner of gratifying her wish. To-night I arranged with my friend, Purves, and——” he stopped, and turned to Mistress Frazer.

“Pardon me, Aunt Cornelia, if you will,” he said politely, but with a twinkle in his blue eye. “’Twas I who was the—Wee Highwayman!”

“Heavens, DICK!” thundered the Squire. “Have you taken leave, lad, of your senses? I vow and protest that you shall be turned from the house for this dastardly trick. To insult our visitors! To inconvenience our guests——! To——” Words failed the Squire; his brow grew dark as thunder as he gazed at his son.

“Sir, doubtless I deserve your blame!” Dick bowed low. “’Twas a foolish prank as I know well. And the only excuse I can tender is that I was inflamed at the discourteous treatment of my dear sister. Though not a London miss, she is to me as dear and beautiful as——”

“Brother, Cynthia was piqued when she penned her note,” continued Dick’s aunt, addressing the Squire. “But I think well of a youth whose sister is the maiden of his first thought. Forgive the boyish prank, since neither Cynthia nor myself have suffered——”

“Father——” began Nan pleadingly.

“Dick is but thoughtless,” added Miss Pomeroy.

“Uncle—forgive him. ’Twas I, myself, brought the whole trouble,” cried Cynthia impulsively.

The Squire stood erect, frowning at his son; but as the pleading voices died away, another sound did what nothing else, perhaps, would have done for the scapegrace.

In through the casement windows floated the sounds of Xmas carolling ; the waits were singing songs out on the drive.

"Egad, 'tis Xmas, and the time of Peace. And the season of goodwill," said the Squire, holding out his hand to Dick. "Let us to supper, ladies—yes, without delay."

"Have you really forgiven me, cousin? And may I have the honour of a dance with you?" said Dick two hours later, when supper was over and the Xmas revelling had begun. The dance in progress was in no sense like the dances to which Cynthia was accustomed. An old harpist from below stairs quavered out the tunes, and the servants, one and all, were footing merrily in the hall.

"Your precious box is safely in your room," continued Dick with a twinkle ; "your 'newest gown' is uncrumpled and safe, upon my word."

"And there let it remain!" retorted Cynthia. "I am in love with the country and country ways. The gown which my dear cousin Nan has lent to me for this evening's wear is, to my eyes, more charming far."

She smiled up at her cousin with laughing face, and put her little mittened fingers on his arm.

"I know not how to dance your country dances," she whispered, "but I am uncommon anxious to learn!"

An Old English Herb Garden

How to Make and Stock One

BY EDNA LAKE

SITTING in your garden, on a hot summer day, and looking at the well-ordered rows of geraniums, lobelia, fuchsias, and all the rest of them, has it ever occurred to you to wonder what gardens of olden days looked like? Have you ever sighed for the herb garden of which you have read, but which you have never seen? Perhaps you have wondered exactly what a herb garden was, and it may be that you have wished that you could have one of your own.

I want here to tell you a little about gardens and gardening in far-off days, and to show how we can all have at least a tiny herb garden, if we have any garden at all, and any inclination to potter about in it.

To begin with very early days. The Romans were great gardeners, and when they conquered Britain they introduced many plants into this country, among the number being chervil, mustard, rue, fennel, and mint. Perhaps the soldiers of Cæsar liked mint sauce—but we are not sure about that! The Druids were great herbalists, and grew many plants for use medicinally, but we do not know very much about either the plants which they cultivated, or the remedies they concocted from them.

Alfred the Great, who was so keenly interested in learning of all sorts, was a great gardener, and encouraged his people to cultivate herbs. Unfortunately, when the invading Danes visited our country, before and during Alfred's reign, they sacked and burned many villages and towns, and records of the plants grown by the Saxons are very incomplete and vague. We know, however, that they grew some sweet-scented plants—gillyflowers—which may have been either clove-scented stocks, or carnations; and also sunflowers, periwinkles, and peonies. The people of those days did not know anything about vegetables. They ate large quantities of meat and fish, and with these

dishes they used dishes of herbs, which no doubt were just as good for them as the cabbages and potatoes of our own time.

In Norman days herb gardens were made and tended by the monks. You will notice that just as the Druids, the priests of the ancient Britons, acted as doctors, so the monks of a later period undertook the work of caring for the physical as well as the spiritual well-being of the people. The monastic gardens were very lovely, restful places, and you may have read of them many times. They were walled in, usually, or sheltered from the gaze of the passer-by by a very thick hedge—so thick that it was quite impossible to see through it. In the gardens were grown all sorts of herbs useful for healing different diseases, as well as other plants of which some part was used for culinary purposes.

There were paths in the herb gardens, made of close-growing herbs, such as camomile, and these, when trodden upon, gave forth a pleasant, aromatic scent, which delighted the people of that day, just as it would please many people now. Sometimes the paths were of turf, but on the whole the path of herbs was preferred, as it was considered very beneficial to inhale the odour of the bruised plants. The old-fashioned lad's love, or southernwood, was a plant which was, at one time, used to strew the floors of living rooms, and the scent from it was supposed to be a grand remedy for depression! So if you have a herb garden, and are feeling rather blue, go out and trample on a piece of lad's love, and see whether your spirits are not raised at once!

At the time of which I am speaking—that is, the Norman period in our country's history—there were no privately-owned gardens at all. It seems difficult to believe that there was ever a time when the houses of ordinary middle-class people were not surrounded by a well-kept garden, or when the country cottages did not boast a more or less beautiful patch of ground, but this is the truth. Gardens were only known as the property of the monasteries, and it seems that no one but the monks thought the task of tilling the soil, to make a garden, at all worth while.

Later on, as people grew better educated, it was seen that it was both pleasant and profitable to have a garden, and the richest man in a district—the lord of the manor—began to have a garden to his house, usually square in shape, and walled or hedged, in imitation of the monastic gardens.

In the fourteenth century gardens attached to manor houses were fairly common, and in them we might have found quite a large collection of herbs. There were also, in these gardens, pergolas, or

covered ways, consisting of poles, lashed together and covered with roses, sweetbriar, or honeysuckle. Another erection was often seen in the gardens, too, called a "herber." It was a sort of rude shelter made, like the pergola, of poles, and planted with roses, honeysuckle, or sweetbriar. It was left open at one side, so that those sitting in it might have a good view of the gardens. The seats inside the "herber" were often nothing more elaborate than banks of earth, faced in some instances with stone, and having their tops covered with close-growing herbs. Naturally these herbers were only habitable in the hottest, driest weather, and even then they must have been rather earwiggy, one cannot help thinking.

In the Middle Ages the gardens contained a large number of plants with which we are all familiar nowadays, and which anyone wanting to start a herb garden would have no difficulty in obtaining. There were wild strawberries in most herb gardens, and these little plants gave fruit which was highly prized for many culinary purposes, since there were no cultivated strawberries till the year 1824. We hardly ever see wild strawberries now, but if we took the trouble to plant some in our gardens, and tend them carefully, we should be well repaid for our trouble. Then, besides the strawberries, these old gardens contained lad's love—plenty of it, too—and woodruff, camomile, lavender, daisies, primroses, foxgloves, thyme, saffron, violets, wild roses and honeysuckle, with many other herbs, well known to almost every one, which I have not space to mention here.

You can see, from the above list, that you would not have any difficulty in stocking your herb garden with hardy plants, needing little cultivation. All or nearly all the plants grown in those far-off days grew with great luxuriance, and called for little in the way of attention.

For many centuries English people used flowers for flavouring articles of food, and had many recipes for sauces made from violets, roses and the oft mentioned gillyflowers, while herbs of all sorts were used in making herb teas, lotions, ointments and other remedies.

Gradually, as men began to travel more, a great change came over the gardens of our land. You may wonder how it came about that we got the vegetable garden and the flower garden as two distinct places, when formerly there had been only one garden, and that a herb garden. With the Age of Discovery, in Tudor times, travel became far more general, and men who went long voyages to other lands brought back with them fresh plants from the countries they visited, and also fresh ideas about gardening. You will remember how Sir Walter Raleigh introduced potatoes into our country, and many other

travellers followed his example, till we find English people beginning to grow and to use the vegetables which are in common use to-day.

French beans were introduced into this country in the days of the Tudors, and scarlet-runner beans and carrots came with the Stuart period. It was during the Tudor period that the flower garden and the herb, or vegetable, garden began to be separated from one another. The newly-introduced vegetables were included in the herb garden for a time, but with the passing of years, herbs became less and vegetables more important in the eyes of the gardeners, with the result that after a time the herb garden was abandoned altogether for the cultivation of vegetables, as we find in our own day.

If you wish to grow herbs you must, if possible, select a sunny position for your garden. Almost all the herbs love sunlight, and ask for little else at your hands. If you wish to model your garden on a herb garden of the Middle Ages, you should have it either walled in, or hedged with a thick hedge. Inside the hedge, or wall, there was often a bank of earth thrown up, and this was planted thickly with sweet-scented herbs, of a close habit of growth. Very frequently, against the wall, or hedge, there ran the pergola, or covered way, and this, too, it would be possible to imitate with the help of oak poles, lashed together, and having roses, honeysuckle, and sweetbriar—which last should find a place in all herb gardens—planted against it.

In the herb garden you might have beds of the gaily-coloured flowers, such as carnations, stocks, marigolds, etc., and other beds where the more sober-hued flowers could find a place. Camomile is an excellent plant for the edges of flower beds, its leaves being as ornamental as any blossom. Violets are always most prolific when grown in large beds, and these flowers love sunlight more than most. Foxgloves, so useful in medicine, on account of the digitalis which is obtained from them, are a most effective background for smaller plants and can be had in a good many ranges of colour, from white to deep purple. Daisies, primroses, cowslips, thyme, mint, and the humble but beautiful dandelion, ought to be found in any garden of this sort, while hollyhocks should as certainly find a place against the wall or hedge.

Paths in the herb garden can be made of close-cropped turf, or of the low-growing herbs. On the whole, grass paths are easier to manage than herb paths, but the modern asphalt path should be eschewed.

When you have started your herb garden it will look after itself, to great extent, since these plants are, as I have said before, hardy and

prolific. Indeed, the trouble usually found is that they are apt to multiply too quickly, and to overrun the garden in a short time. You will most certainly find in time that it will be necessary to cut away a number of plants and restrict their numbers, in order to keep your beds and borders in some semblance of order. A neatly arranged herb garden is, of course, more to be desired than one that is overgrown with plants, all jostling one another.

If you are interested in herb remedies there are several books now to be obtained which tell you how to make ointments, lotions, and teas, from the different herbs ; but perhaps you will prefer to leave the medicinal aspect of the herb garden to others. If, however, you have a lot of leisure and a good deal of land available, herb growing for the market is a profitable as well as a very delightful industry.

Ogier, the Dane

A Poem

BY W. J. HAWKES, M.A.

GREAT King Charlemagne sat in his tent,
His looks were sad and his brow was bent,
For a Saracen force had attacked his land
And their might was such he could not withstand.
He sighed as he thought, "Would I had again
Such a knight at my side as brave Ogier, the Dane!"

For seven long years had Ogier been
In a dungeón dark, where no light was seen,
For the oath of vengeance he dared to swear
'Gainst Charlot, the great king's son and heir;
For by him had his own fair son been slain—
Hate grew in the heart of proud Ogier, the Dane!

The king was old and his strength was gone,
No longer he fought as he once had done;
And the Saracen Emir no longer feared
To challenge each knight. Yet none appeared
To meet him in combat upon the plain.
Alas, for the days of brave Ogier, the Dane!

A knight to his prison has gone with speed,
For Ogier is wanted in time of need;
And the Emperor offers him wealth and lands,
If once more 'gainst the Saracen foe he stands.
But rewards and promises are all in vain—
"A life for a life!" cries Ogier, the Dane.

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"Let Charlemagne swear, when the fight is done,
To give me the life of his only son!
For this alone will I meet the foe,
And back with this answer, I bid thee go."
And Charlemagne, stricken with grief and pain,
Hath given his promise to Ogier, the Dane.

Now Ogier's armour is dark with dust,
And his mighty weapons are stained with rust;
But his limbs are strong and his sight is keen,
And his heart's as brave as it always hath been.
So away he speeds across the plain,
For there's work to do for Ogier, the Dane.

The Saracen Emir laughs in scorn
At the dusty knight with his cloak all torn,
Who rides against him with sword stretched out.
Cries he, "I have put these dogs to rout,
For four of their knights my sword hath slain,
And there's none I fear save Ogier, the Dane!

"But Ogier is dead or far away,
And surely none other shall stop my way."
Then with lance in hand, each on his horse,
Against each other they ride a course.
With a crash that re-echoes across the plain
The Saracen falls before Ogier, the Dane.

But the Christian's steed has fallen dead,
His heart is burst and his course is sped.
And sword in hand to their feet they rise,
And each on the foeman in fury flies.
Then Ogier speaks, "Now one of us twain
Must die, for thou fightest with Ogier, the Dane!"

'Tis finished. Still holding his bloodstained sword,
Cries Ogier, "Give, Charlemagne, my reward!"
And the king consents, for his word he keeps,
But he turns his head and with grief he weeps
For his son, Charlot, who, bound with a chain,
Now kneels at the feet of brave Ogier, the Dane.

Then the Dane's great broadsword is raised on high,
And the watching knights give a fearful cry,
As the blade swings up to deliver the blow,
But it never descends. Cries Ogier, "No;
Great king, take back thy son again,
He is spared from death by Ogier, the Dane.

"For I would not have my bitterest foe
Such mortal grief and sorrow know
As I felt, when I lost my only son.
I leave thee now, for my task is done.
Thy hand, sir king, for never again
Shalt thou look on the face of Ogier, the Dane!"

He turned from the place and without a word
He mounted his steed and away he spurred.
But the tale of a man with a heart so great
As to spare the foe who deserved his hate,
Our memory keeps. We may look in vain
For another as gallant as Ogier, the Dane.

Taking the Plunge

A Story of a River Fête

BY NINA CONDRON

JOHN DENBEIGH lifted his eyes from a row of figures and gazed across the dusty office. The straight little back of the young lady typist was a good deal more attractive than the dreary row of figures, so John continued to gaze. It was very hot, the open window beyond the lady typist framed a vista of shining roofs burnished by the glare of the noonday sun. John sighed and turned resolutely to his work ; that is, his eyes returned to the row of figures, but his thoughts utterly refused to follow them and hovered tenderly in the direction of the clicking typewriter.

Laura looked pale, he had noticed it when she arrived at the office that morning ; no doubt it was the heat, but what an outrageous shame that a girl should have to work so hard in a stuffy hole of an office. What a rotten world it was ! A wave of Bolshevik emotion swept over him, he grasped his pen fiercely as if it were a weapon of destruction for the punishment of heartless worlds. Then he leaned his head on his hand and conjured up the day-dream, a dream that was very familiar to him and never very far off.

It concerned a deep green lane, winding, cool and inviting, to a tiny cottage set in a flowery garden, where a Laura who did not have to work hard in a stuffy office tended the roses and did other light and delectable tasks. In the dusk she would stand at the garden gate, gazing down the dim green lane, waiting for her hero and protector to return to her—the role of hero and protector of course was his, and the cottage was his, and the roses, and wonder of wonders ! Laura was his too !

John returned to the row of figures with a *bump*, but again his thoughts refused to “come to heel.” He traced elaborate patterns on the blotting-pad, and found with a start that they were taking the form of a gabled cottage and Laura’s name written in trails of inky rose-

buds. After all, he asked himself as he had often asked before, why should this dream remain a mere dream? It was quite within the range of possibility; the cottage was an actual fact, a little bit of property left lately to him by a conveniently defunct relative. He had had a rise in salary earlier in the year, and with care it would be sufficient for two to live upon.

So far, so good. The insurmountable difficulty lay in informing Laura of these facts. She was very friendly to him, but her friendliness was, John considered, hopelessly platonic, and if he tried to warm it up a bit into something more tender he was met with such alarming coolness and off-hand cheeriness of manner, that he was instantly frightened into his shell.

By this it will be seen that John was one of that rare and almost extinct species—a diffident young man. The sad and rather extraordinary part of the story is that Laura was diffident too, so it did not look as if they would ever get any further.

Lunch time came, a welcome respite. John strode out of the office and into the airless streets. A wild impatience seized him; a blind fury. The dream and the little pale face of Laura had been too much for him that morning. Presently he found himself in the welcome shade of the river walk and, sitting down on one of the green seats, he glared at the peaceful, gliding waters and gently waving rushes. What sort of a fool was he? he asked himself fiercely.

Before he had time to answer this interesting question Laura came slowly round the corner. His heart began thumping in a wholly ridiculous fashion, but she did not see him. She was engrossed in a newspaper, an earnest little pucker in her brown eyes.

“Laura,” he called.

She looked up with an abstract air. “Oh, hullo, John,” she said.

Then she came and sat down on the seat beside him. This John felt was very wonderful; in fact, a heaven-sent coincidence. The time to speak, and speak *bravely*, had arrived. He moistened his lips with his tongue, and endeavoured to get rid of a wretched frog that had taken up its abode in his throat. Beads of perspiration stood out on his brow.

“Laura,” he commenced huskily—

“Five and six—ten and six,” murmured Laura dreamily—“be quiet for a moment, John, I’m calculating.”

John subsided; bitterness filled his soul, the moment had gone and his courage with it. Why could she not help him a little? Why——?

“There,” said Laura triumphantly, “250 fairy lamps and 12 yards of butter muslin. We are going in for the River Fête next Saturday

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evening," she explained graciously. "Our boat will be called 'Youth at the prow and Pleasure at the helm.'"

"And who is the youth at the prow?" John inquired gloomily.

"Gilda Darnley's brother, and Gilda and I are to be 'Pleasure.' We are having a huge white swan in front of our boat; Gilda's brother is making it, he is awfully clever you know."

John didn't know and he didn't want to know. A fierce loathing for Paul Darnley seized him. A conceited, dressed-up donkey—that's what *he* was.

And just then, with dramatic suddenness, the "conceited, dressed-up donkey" appeared on a bridge a little higher up the river, and Laura, catching sight of him, gathered up her papers and with a whisk of skirts was off in his direction.

Poor John!

Saturday evening came and the river was *en fête*. All the long hot day, in every nook and crannie and backwater of the river, competitors were busy working at their boats. Now the burning sun had slipped behind a pile of golden clouds in the west and a grateful coolness fanned the cheeks of the heated toilers.

People in holiday attire flocked on either side of the river and took their places in the tiers of seats kindly provided by a thoughtful Town Council. The dusk deepened, and hundreds of Chinese lanterns came to life, lighting the darkening waters with their globes of rose and gold; they hung from every branch and bush like wondrous fairy fruit.

Through the gathering crowds on the river-side John Denbeigh made his way. He was not in a pleasant mood; there was a portentous frown on his brow, and his hands were thrust into his trouser pockets in a manner distinctly detrimental to his best suit.

A little later he leaned against the bole of a tree, in the enclosure of the Club that was the collecting place for competitors, and surveyed the gay scene with cold disapproval. A Noah's Ark, large and clumsy, loomed out of the twilight. Shem, Ham and Japhet raced about with harrassed expressions on their faces and various domestic animals tucked under their arms.

Noah tore his beard in despair, as he wrestled with an unruly hen that refused to be tethered to the deck of its biblical abode. A masked gondolier flirted discreetly with a Venetian maid. Happy confusion reigned supreme. Somewhere hidden in the trees, a band throbbed out a dreamy waltz tune.

John turned and espied Laura. She was talking eagerly to Paul Darnley under the shadow of a syringa bush, her cheeks flushed with

excitement. The jealous pain stirred in John's heart and the frown on his brow deepened. What was she saying to him——? It was not at all nice of John, but he strained his ears to catch the drift of her words—it was something about tin-tacks and tapers and fairy lamps.

Paul hurried off and Laura came over the grass towards him. Like some goddess of the dusk she came, "robed in white samite," roses in her hair, roses in her hands and stars in her eyes. The soft golden light of the lanterns flowed around her like a halo.

At the sight of her John caught his breath, love struggled with pride and jealousy in his heart. And then, because for a moment the latter triumphed, he did an unforgivable thing. Feigning not to have seen her, he turned swiftly on his heel and left the Boat Club. He pushed his way through the crowds of spectators angry and miserable, and, all unknown to him, Laura stared after him with sorrowful eyes and a little sigh of longing.

It was John's intention to walk on far into the night, far from the noise of crowds and bands and glitter of fairy lamps—to walk on and on with his heavy heart, until he found relief in physical weariness. But when he reached the town bridge he paused for a moment. A rocket had flared in the night, the signal for the procession of competing boats to commence. John leaned his elbows on the parapet of the bridge and watched moodily.

First in order came the Noah's Ark. Spectators clapped and cheered, and young men of obscure origin grew facetious at the expense of the Noah family. Then the stately swan drawing "Youth at the prow and Pleasure at the helm" glided into view, and the applause was vigorously renewed. In the distance John could discern Laura and her roses under a fairy-like canopy, and Paul Darnley standing up slim and straight in the prow.

The procession lengthened; one dainty craft after another appeared round the corner glowing with light and colour, until the dark silken waters of the river seemed strewn with a thousand precious jewels.

It was close to the bridge that the catastrophe occurred. It was all the fault of the Noah's Ark, and it happened with alarming suddenness as such things usually do. The clumsy Ark, in its difficulty in getting under the bridge, backed a little and collided with the Swan. There was a violent bump, which sent the "Youth at the prow" tumbling into the waters, and a blazing lantern into the canopy, simultaneously. The next instant the flimsy decorations were on fire.

John watched for one moment—an eternity of agony and horror. He saw Paul Darnley swimming round the boat, and heard him call

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to the girls to jump clear of the burning boat. He saw Laura poised on the stern for an instant, the greedy flames already creeping up the whiteness of her skirts. Her face was set and terrified in the lurid glare, then she staggered and fell with a little cry into the dark river.

John did not hesitate any longer. He scrambled on to the coping stone of the bridge and straightway took the highest dive he had ever taken in his life. The other boats in self-defence had got as far away as they could, and as John moved swiftly through the chill waters, terror struck at his heart.

Laura could not swim, he knew. Supposing he was too late? His fear mounted to a perfect frenzy, until at last he caught sight of a shimmer of white. Oh, blessed relief! Swiftly he reached her and caught her in his strong young arms, as the waters closed once more over her head.

With his precious burden in his arms he waded ashore a moment later. Eager hands were stretched out to help him but he did not heed them. For him there were no crowds, no voices, no anxious words of inquiry: Laura was in his arms, sobbing her heart out somewhere in the region of his second waistcoat button, and the world stood still at the wonder of it.

"My darling!" he murmured passionately.

"Oh John, I'm so frightened—*don't* let me go!" she sobbed.

John looked down at her with his heart in his eyes. And then—because she looked so small, and forlorn, and wet—all his tongue-tied diffidence vanished, and he took for the second time that evening a tremendous plunge.

"You are safe, dear," he answered her, "safe in my arms; I will take care of you——" and then, very softly—"for *ever*—may I, Laura?"

And Laura lifted her face from the region of his waistcoat button, smiled through her tears, and shyly whispered—"Yes, John."

Frida, the Forest Girl

A Daughter of the True Faith in Early Britain

BY E. CHARLES VIVIAN

WHEN Augustine, Saint, had been dead three years, the news of his death came through to Ambrose, who was of Augustine's kind, where he lived alone at the edge of Andreds Wold. The ravaging Danes were yet to come up to the homes of the forest, for this was in the very early days, and Ambrose had but few converts among the dwellers of the forest. A charcoal burner's wife; a hind or two who saw with clearer eyes than his fellows; Frida, Ethan's daughter—but Ambrose counted Frida not wholly a convert, for she was fearful of admitting her faith; certain boys of the household of Gurth, whose herds fed on the forest sward: it was a mixed assembly that gathered when Ambrose bade them, to hear him preach to them and exhort them to hold fast, since they were a seed which in due time should bear fruit and enrich the land.

If one had seen their way of clothing, and judged their stations in life by the look of them, it would have seemed that Ambrose's little band of converts was not of much use so far as enrichment went. But then, Ambrose did not judge these things by ordinary standards; like his Master, he looked for another sort of enrichment, and so worked and taught such people of the wold as would hear and understand.

It was a pagan community of the old sort; Rome had not touched it to any extent. In the days of the height of Rome's power there had been set up an altar to Jove; but in these days it was used for the more savage deities to whom Gurth splashed wine when he felt religiously inclined. Valhalla rapidly superseded Olympus, and Thor's hammer took the place of Jove's thunderbolts in the minds of the wold-dwellers, when Rome's stretched arm had been withdrawn. The long night had begun to fall on that corner of Britain, long before Rome's real power had declined, and here at the edge of the wold was forewarning of the Saxon invasion of a later day. These people,

having found a good steading with Gurth to lead them, had settled; had they been Danes, they would have roved and burnt and taken ship again, and Ambrose had had no material on which to work. There they were, cut off by the forest from the land side, a self-sufficient community; how Ambrose had found them and settled among them, was one of the things that Gurth knew, perhaps; why Gurth, being servant of Thor, let Ambrose stay unharmed, is another of the things which Gurth alone could tell.

Ambrose was spare and thin and timid, a man of much fasting; Gurth was young and burly, a man of herds and ships and ceorls, and of much laughter. When Ambrose would have told him the message of the Gospel, Gurth roared with laughter.

"Tell it to the old wives and the children, skinny-pate," he said. "And abjure the water; drink mead, man, and so gather up some of the sun into that pasty face of yours. By Odin, but if you were more worth the use of my muscle, I'd toss you over the roof. Out, skinny-pate—out and patter to starvelings! None of your washy talk here!"

Ambrose, knowing his man and waiting his time, strove no more with Gurth then; he went out among Gurth's people, and here and there he made one hear, until he had near on twenty converts. But that was a matter of years, and meanwhile Frida, one of the first, seemed to him no more of an asset—he wanted live converts, people who would help on his work.

But Frida feared Ethan, her father; she loved the sense of worship that came of Ambrose's teachings, but knew that Ethan would have lashed her back raw if he had dreamed her a stray from the fold of the old gods. For Ethan had seen the coming of this new faith in other quarters before he shipped with Gurth to land on the edge of Andreds Wold; he had seen the altars of his fathers desecrated, their high places spoiled by the proselytising fervour of the shaven-heads, and if any mentioned Ambrose to him he raged, at times cursing Gurth for letting this evil influence stand where only the old gods should have place. If he had thought that his own daughter stood aside from the old ways—

She was a yellow-haired slip of a girl, nearing her nineteenth birthday, when Ethan found her on her knees—the discovery had had to come, some day. It was a stark morning of late winter, when a wind blew in from the east and made the steadings so cold that it was good to crouch under the lee of a wall while the wind went past and overhead. Ethan, Gurth's man, took his daughter by her hair and swung her out from their wattled hut to the bitter weather without.

"Bewitched!" he roared at her. "Mad and untrue to your faith at

the word of a man-woman with a shaven crown. Cool your knees in the wind, fool of a girl—here's no home for weaklings. May the gods of your forefathers bring you reason ! ”

He left her out in the cold while he went to look to the needs of his beasts, and she dared not cross the threshold to warm herself. Ethan came back from his tasks looking furious, for he had found two sheep dead of the cold.

“ The gods take their vengeance,” he said, grinding his teeth at his daughter. “ So will they take and take till nothing is left to me. Out you go to the wold—let your new god find you new sheep and a new father—no more do you come back to me. Out to the wold, witch, till you come to own the gods of your forefathers as your own.”

Now, it was two miles good to Gurth's great steading, which was nearest of human habitations to Ethan's hut. Frida knew that her father's anger would cool again if he were given time, but there was every chance that he would go to lay the case before Gurth, and the two dead sheep would make a black case against her. Obviously, in the view of Gurth and Ethan, the vengeance of the old gods was falling on Ethan for his daughter's defect, and if they two got together before she could have a word with Gurth, there might be some harsh fate in store not only for her, but for Ambrose as well. Gurth was chief, and a just man, but the first to speak with him would present a case, and it would be well that he should hear her case before her father put his version of the story forward.

Thus, not answering her father's reproaches, she set out for Gurth's steading. The pale sun gave no warmth in that wind, and her clothing was thin, so that she was blue with cold from waiting while her father looked to his sheep. As she went, she picked up a little axe from the wood-pile, where Ethan had left it, as some protection against any evil she might meet in the forest. She went, even in broad daylight, accompanied by a fear that she would not name to herself, since for the time it was only a fear.

Two miles—she, knowing nothing of our way of measuring distance, simply reckoned it a long way for a girl to traverse the forest alone in the depth of winter, when even the hogs were fearsome through the scarcity of food. She made half the distance to Gurth's steading, and then the fear that had gone with her so far became more than a fear, for she heard the yap and howl that told her of the presence of wolves. They sounded both before and behind her; the east wind drove her scent ahead of her as she went, and she knew that whatever pack was ahead had winded her. She felt glad that she had brought the axe, and then more terrified as she realised that it was little protection in

her hands. A pack of wolves would soon drag her down, axe or no axe, and then——

The yelping grew near and loud, and ceased; some one of the pack ahead had caught sight of her. Beside the forest path was a mighty tree that had been old when Cæsar landed in Britain, and the side of its trunk that was towards her showed a hollow that might protect her back and sides until somebody came along the path. She would have welcomed a sight of Ethan's frowning face, then, but save for her knowledge of the presence of the wolves, there was no hint of any life but her own on the path that morning. In normal times, the wolves kept to the depths of Andre's Wold, but the winter had sharpened their appetites and their noses, and had driven them to hunt within reach of the dwellings of men.

They pattered into sight as she backed against the tree and took a grip on the little axe—slinking, sneaky-looking brutes. They did not attack her at first, but sat up or stood round, licking their jowls and steadily gathering courage for the attack. Even the wolves of the wold knew that an attack on a man is a dangerous business, and in all probability there were members of this pack that had felt steel and slunk off to lick wounds. Frida stamped her foot and shouted, and the beasts started and shrunk back—but she dared not leave the safety of the tree, and again they closed in, snarling.

Thus, snarling and growling, they steadily drew nearer to her—hunger drove them against their will. By and bye, one darted out and snapped at her feet, but the axe caught him on the side of the head, and he retired howling and dripping blood at which the other members of the pack licked as it dropped to the ground. The smell and taste of that blood gradually worked up the rest to forget their fears of a human being, and more especially of one who made no attempt to advance against them and drive them away. They circled, snarling angrily, and then another detached himself from the pack and leaped. Frida's axe, well-swung, caught him in mid leap, and the sharp steel went through hide and bone to the brain, so that he fell dead before her.

The next came not at her, but grabbed the still quivering paw of his dead mate and dragged it away, and soon a dozen were crowding round the corpse of their companion, tearing and worrying—but there were others, old and crafty, who still reckoned on making a meal of Frida. Two came at her at once, and she disabled the foremost one so that he got in the way of his fellow in trying to retreat, and so saved her for the time. Then came another that she laid dead with the axe—they were enfeebled by hunger, and Frida was swift of action and keen of eye, or it had gone more hardly with her.

There were two of the pack dead before her, and another had limped off on three feet, out of the fight, when hoof-falls and a shout sent the whole pack scurrying—an arrow put an end to a third as they fled.

Gurth, ruddy-faced and cheery as ever, rode into view, and reined up at the sight of the girl with the axe. Her robe had slipped to show her white shoulder and the heaving of her breast, and there were stains of blood from the axe on her skirt, while the thrill of the fight had brought a stain of colour into her cheeks. Gurth stared.

"It is Ethan's daughter!" he said at last, and holloaed until two of his men rode up beside him. "Girl, who taught you to fight wolves?"

"I was on my way to you, lord," Frida answered, "when this pack set on me. I had naught but the axe for my defence——"

Gurth laughed his great laugh. "Naught but the axe?" he roared. "Did ever a woman the like with a pack of hungry wolves? Where learned you this man's work, and what do you out and away from your home in such a bitter day as this?"

"My father drove me forth, since I prayed to Christ, the true son of God," she answered. "In the bitterness of the wind two of his sheep died, and for this he blames my prayers, saying that the old gods have slain them for vengeance on him."

Gurth looked at her curiously. "But the wolves—how comes it that you fight wolves and drive them off?"

Frida returned his look steadily. "My lord Gurth," she said, "when I heard the wolves in the path I prayed again to the God of whom Ambrose taught me. He gave me this tree for a shelter, and the strength to use the axe for my own defence. He sent you to my rescue when my own strength failed, for the Christ hears the voices of those who call on him."

Gurth got down from his horse and flung the reins to his man. "See," he said, more quietly, "there is a wound on your arm, Frida—let me bind it for you."

She looked down; she had been unconscious of any scratch till then. Blood ran down her arm from where she had caught it on the jagged end of a bough as she swung the axe against the wolves. Gurth had a neck-wrap that he unwound to bind round the damaged arm.

"So your father drove you forth?" he queried.

She nodded. "It was his right," she said simply. "Yet I would have come to you, lord Gurth, to plead before he came in anger to bid you condemn me."

"And how would you plead?" Gurth asked.

"Do not all our people know you for a just chief?" she asked in return. "I would have told you simply that the death of the sheep was not to be laid to my account, and begged the shield of your strength against my father's anger."

Gurth looked long at her. He marked the silkiness of her yellow hair, the colour of her cheeks, and the blue of her eyes that was like a promise of summer. And, as he thus looked, gradually she came to understand what his look meant and tried to draw herself away.

"Having seen and spoken with you, I will go back to my father," she said. "There is no more to say, save to ask your protection if need should arise."

"Frida," Gurth said gently, "if I, Gurth, told you that there was no longer any need to come to me to plead—if I bade you go not back, since Ethan has once turned you out? My steading is a lonely place since we came to this shore, and there is need of a woman's laughter. It is not Gurth the chief, Frida, but Gurth the man who speaks to you."

She looked at him, wondering, unbelieving.

"I have seen you about Ethan's place," he said, "marked you as fairest of our girls, and said no word. Now I know you as bravest, and as for your God, He is a God worth knowing that can give you strength and courage, alone, in the face of a pack of hungry wolves. Gurth the man pleads with you, Frida—go not back to Ethan any more, for Gurth has need of you."

She laid her hands in his. "My lord," she said simply, "I am glad. For now is answered a prayer that I dared not pray."

Ambrose married them, the day after he baptised Gurth.

My Strange Ghostly Adventure

An Experience in an Indian Bungalow

BY REV. ERNEST RICHARDS, B.D.

"OH, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." There are stranger things in the East than the prosaic dweller in the West ever dreams of; amid the palm and mangrove bushes of India, or on the sinuous streams of the Sunderbunds, the night is clad in weird, eerie scenes which creep upon the imagination in shuddering sensations. Even the Indian cantonment, where Tommy Atkins lives, is not free from ghostly legends.

I was, at the time of the ghostly adventure which I am now relating, a middy, free for a few days' leave at Christmas-time, and spending my holiday with some missionary friends near Barrackpore, a cantonment sacred in the annals of the Indian Mutiny.

During my stay at Digla I occupied a couple of rooms detached from the house proper. The only other person within half a mile of my little bungalow was my native servant, Boli; he lived in a go-down (outhouse) about ten fathoms from my outer door.

The room which I occupied was reputed to be haunted. Long before the Mutiny a sergeant-major's wife was supposed to have been cruelly murdered by an ammunition civilian; and during night skirmishes it was anything but a favourite outpost for a lonely Tommy. They did not mind a chance of being sniped by tribesmen when doing outpost duty away on the Hill frontier. But all the Tommies had the chills and fevers when they were detailed—on special occasions—for sentry-go at Digla. After a time the Army surgeons appreciated the cause of sudden ague in such cases, and having diagnosed such an one successfully and with becoming mock gravity, the surgeon generally told the colour-sergeant of the company to report him for duty; it was simply a case of Digla fever. And so the Digla fever became a joke with the Rifle Brigade in cantonments. In passing, let me add that I did not know the meaning of the word "diagnose" at the time; I looked it up in a dictionary at the mission house.

Notwithstanding the joke of Digla fever, however, a solitary Tommy of any rank generally passed my bungalow at the double after sundown ; and if the hour were ominously near twelve the solitary strollers made a *détour* round by the married quarters, and ran the risk of seven days' C.B. rather than pass the Digla bungalow, which was situated between the hospital, graveyard, and army gymnasium, whilst its left flank, or portside, was skirted by a large tank or reservoir ; a large section of this tank was surrounded by mangrove bushes.

On Christmas Eve I returned to my solitary abode about 11 P.M., and beyond having my wits scared out of me by a surprise challenge from a lonely sentry at an ammunition store, nothing unusual occurred *en route* to my haunted bungalow ; indeed, before midnight I had already taken a cold bath and was stretched on my charpoy (bed), clad in pyjamas, reading *David Copperfield*.

I laughed from time to time in the middle of my reading as the thought of the sentry's fright recurred. "Halt, who comes there!" "Fr-i-end!" I said, quite scared. "Pass, friend. All's well!" This, of course, is a repetition of what occurred at the ammunition house, when the sentry stepped into the moonlight as if shot from a gun.

Several times this thought came and went, invariably provoking me to mirthful laughter, as I muttered audibly to myself, "The idea of being afraid of a ghost," when suddenly, in the middle of one of these bursts of solitary glee, my face became rigid, my jaw dropped, and the book fell from my hands, as I beheld, on the opposite whitewashed wall, a large head and giant hands moving with great rapidity ; it was the exact facsimile of a shadowgraph on a white sheet.

For several moments I could not move ; my lips grew dry and my tongue sticky. I had furlled many a sky-sail and royal in a tropical squall hanging on by my eyebrows, but this sort of thing hove me on my beam-ends at one blast.

The shadows came and went three or four times during the space of a minute—a minute of absolute inaction on my part. Then I got up, pushed my feet into a pair of slippers, and shouted, "Who's there? Now then, stop this skylarking!" and so on.

No response came to my hail until Boli came, sleepily poking his head through the purdah, and saying, as he rubbed his eyes, "What do you want, Sahib?"

I had now recovered my courage, and being in a high state of nervous tension I soon acquainted Boli with the details, using broken Bengali, broken Hindustani, and more eloquent half-deck English, as a means of communication. Boli only faintly grasped my vigorous explanation ; in fact, he was not quite awake. I was so annoyed at this that I gave

him a push as I repeated the story, which capsized Boli into the lee scuppers—so to speak. When he got up he was *quite* awake, and with a profound salaam said:—

“Something must be done. I thought perhaps it was a snake in your bed, Sahib.”

Just then a fish or a water turtle splashed in the tank, and the wind moaned eerily through the mangrove bushes.

“Ah, Sahib,” said Boli, “there are strange things in the tank. The goras (soldiers) say that a white memsahib jumps out of the water at night.”

I remembered to have heard myself some such story in the cantonments. It ran to the effect that the murdered wife of the sergeant-major sometimes appeared in ghostly form on the water of the tank into which her dead body had been thrown. In any case, though the Tommies bathed freely in the tank on bathing parade, none cared to be near it at night without company.

Of course, I said nothing to Boli in reply, but sent him for his lantern, and with this we both searched the two rooms of the bungalow.

We found nothing extraordinary inside, and though we watched on the step for an hour or more we saw nothing in the tank except the movements of a fish, snake, or turtle. Beyond the tank and my fence the gymnasium was a dark blot in the moonlight; on the right were patches of jungle, at the rear of the bungalow the palm-shaded road which led to the cemetery stretched in streaks of black and white shadow for half a mile.

After an hour's watching on the step Boli broke the silence:—

“Plenty dream, Sahib! Plenty devil dream! Sahib him take too much exmas pudding.”

Though I was annoyed at Boli's diagnosis I laughed outright and replied:—

“Well, anyway, I'll turn in. You, Boli, can stretch your blanket on the mat in my room.”

Once we were fixed for the night I got Boli to blow out the light, and we were soon fast asleep.

Next morning, when I awoke, the sun was streaming in through the venetians; Boli had gone to his morning tasks; my only companion was a monsoon frog who was shrieking like a costermonger in the corner.

By the time I had dressed Boli had returned from the mission house with my chota-hazri (little breakfast).

“Now,” I said to Boli, as he placed the lunch basket on the table, “did you keep the secret as I told you?”

"Yes, Sahib."

"You did not tell one person—not even your brother, the mali (gardener)?"

"No, Sahib."

"Will you swear by Rama that you did not?"

Boli gazed blankly for a moment through the open window, as if contemplating what such an oath might involve.

"Now, own up, Boli, because I shall be bound to hear it; a story like that will soon go cruising round the cantonments; besides, if you lie it might visit you."

Boli visibly flinched at the latter suggestion. Then, after a moment's pause, he said:—

"Well, Sahib, I spoke only in whispers to the chota memsahib."

"What!" I replied, "you told Miss Marjory, of all the people in the world? And she, Boli—she laughed; she laughed at the Sahib?"

"She only laugh berry little, Sahib. She just laugh berry little—he—he—he, and then she put her little sari (handkerchief) to her mouth and go away."

"Boli," I said, "I'll break every bone in your body," and I raised my hand in a feint to strike.

Boli fell instantly at my feet.

"Oh, Sahib," he said, "I sit in eschooly by mission house waiting for bearer for chota-hazri. By and by Miss Majry—all the same chota Baba Majry (little girl Marjory)—she come and say to me, she say, 'Boli, you look too much sleepy. Why look too much sleepy? Did the Middy Sahib keepy too much work?' 'No,' I say, 'not too much work. Middy Sahib berry good.' Then she look me through and through and I tell de story, Sahib."

Marjory was the missionary's daughter, a girl just seventeen and a half, fresh out from home and school, and inclined to look down on a middy of barely seventeen, and inclined to take a rise out of me, as we say in the half-deck. Though seventeen she was still called "chota Baba" by the native servants, who had known her as a very little girl.

"Now you've given the show away, Boli," I said, "get out of my sight. The chaff will be worse than the ghost."

A few minutes later I broke off in the middle of eating my chota-hazri. Here's a go, I thought; Marjory knows, and now she'll twit me for all I'm worth. Anyhow, if nobody else knows it may not be so bad.

At eight o'clock I went for a swim in the tank, and then, having dressed, I walked to the mission house, nearly a mile away and situated on the Government Road.

After morning service and lunch we spent the afternoon in sleep and reading ; but after dinner we sat out on the verandah and told a few Christmas stories.

"Could you not tell us a ghost story?" said Marjory, turning to me with a rather ominous twinkle in her eye. "But perhaps you are afraid of ghosts. Some people are, especially nervous people."

Fortunately for me her father broke in here and told us about his own weird experience in a Dak bungalow (rest house).

I had intended to ask permission to stay in the mission house that night, but the challenge of Marjory had made me resolve not to funk another night in my little bungalow. Accordingly, midnight found me walking towards my bungalow, accompanied by Boli, whom I resolved should stay with me in my room for the night.

Boli stretched himself on my floor and I lay in my pyjamas on the bed, the lamp being left alight by my orders.

It would be no use denying that I was rather nervous. I slept in little snatches, much as one does in a bunk when expecting to hear the cry: "All hands shorten sail."

It must have been two o'clock when I awoke from one of these little snatches and heard an ominous moaning. At first I thought it was the common accompaniment to the Indian night, the low howling of the jackal. But it rose and fell in unmistakable human cadences. I shouted repeatedly, my courage oozing out with every hail. At my last challenge to the unseen shrieks or noises Boli awoke, and sat dazed and bleached. Just as Boli awoke the shadowy head and hands appeared on the opposite wall again; soon after this another pair of hands appeared below the first, and then Boli fell back and buried his head under the blanket with a suppressed moan.

Meantime I sat and gazed anon at the apparition on the wall and through the window whence the sound proceeded. In a minute or so the apparition came and went intermittently, like a heliograph, then disappeared altogether, and at the same time the noises ceased.

Little by little my nerves were restored to a dead calm; but it was "dim dawn behind the tamarisks" before I slept. I had no chotahazri next morning; Boli had gone forth already to the world with his story. At breakfast Marjory was most pressing in her inquiries about my health, and about the ghost, which was now common property. She suggested taking a revolver and a sword to kill it, and she had what our second mate called "the loan of me" for the day.

Now, Marjory's chaff had roused my indignation, and the day had brought a new, if temporary, courage. I resolved to stay by the whole affair, and made a plan of detection worthy of Sherlock Holmes.

Into my plan two friendly sergeants entered, and they promised to stay with me in the bungalow during the night.

I will not trouble the reader with the details of the day, but that night found Sergeants Cooper and Fulton and myself in my room. Boli had temporary leave of absence to visit a neighbouring shrine.

We made armed preparations to search for the ghost and circumnavigate him if necessary.

At about midnight I strapped on the sword. In order to adjust the buckle I looked through the glass on my dressing-table, when I noticed a little gecko lizard running up and down the mirror. I turned round to call the sergeant's attention to this, when, on the opposite wall, I saw the head and two, and then four, hands respectively dodging in shadowy manner as before.

I did not speak. I simply sat on the side of the bed and laughed, and laughed, and laughed in continuous glee.

"Why! what's the matter?" said Cooper.

"Look!" I gasped. "Look! look!" and pointed alternately at the mirror and wall.

In a moment they saw it and "caught on." Then they laughed, and we all three roared together.

Amid laughter and jests we threw our arms down and "gave up the ghost," as Cooper said, taking great credit for the joke when he explained the affair to Marjory.

It is easily explained. The little lizard, which is very common in Indian houses, and fond of the lamplight, had been running up and down the mirror in front of the lamp; and the weak light had reflected it, magnified many times, on to the opposite wall.

"But the noises?" said Marjory, when I explained it to her next morning. "The noises?" she repeated, with a twinkle.

"Ah, yes," I said, rather dolefully, "the noises."

"Well, after all," said Marjory, "you made a good try to find out the ghost, and you succeeded in one part. The noises! Well, I got Sergeants Cooper and Fulton to steal round by the bungalow with a couple of privates and make the noises—that is, on the second night. The fact of their occurring at about the time of the shadow or lizard reflection was a mere coincidence.

"And," continued Marjory, after a pause, in a rather condescending manner, "you are not a bad little middy; but never be afraid of ghosts again."

After I got to be twenty Marjory allowed me to write to her, but that, as Kipling says, is another story.

Making Cæsar Real

What Came of Julia's Bright Idea

BY EDNA LAKE

IT was really Miss Sterndale's fault. She had said so much about our making Cæsar real, and visualising it, and all that sort of rot, that it was no wonder Julia got the bright idea when she did.

"Girls, have you heard the latest?" It was Myrtle Warren who put the question as we of Form Five Lower gathered in the cloakroom one morning before the first bell rang.

"What? Which latest?"

"Anything decent?"

"Fire it off, old thing. Don't make a mystery of it."

Voices, more or less muffled as their owners bent to unlace boots, hurled these injunctions at Myrtle.

"Well, it is the Sterndale beast again. She's posted a notice that all our Form are to stay for an extra hour of Latin, three afternoons a week till further notice, from two-thirty till three-thirty—hockey practice time, of course."

Groans, loud and long, greeted this announcement.

"What's it for?" It was Julia Drummond who asked the question.

"General slackness, I suppose. You know she's hinted at doing it, more than once. It doesn't give any reason—on the notice, I mean—but that's what she is doing it for. Now, girls, what's to be our move?" Myrtle looked about her with a light of battle in her hazel eyes.

"Three extra hours of Latin grind a week! Not likely we'll take that lying down," said Daisy Scott decidedly.

"And for a person like the Sterndale, too. She hasn't the remotest idea of keeping order, or doing anything decent," affirmed Ida Swain.

"I can't think what she has come here for," added Joyce Bianco. "This school has always had mistresses worth something, up till now. But the Sterndale is the absolute limit. Why, the Sixth do whatever they like when she is taking them, and so do Upper Five. I vote we do the same—just lark about and have rags, and that sort of thing. It's no good trying to work decently," she ended in a complacent manner that aroused a titter.

"Such a very hard-working Form as we are, too. It's hard lines," scoffed Fay Desmond.

"Oh well, we don't slack so much for the other mistresses. The Sterndale makes you feel work-shy, even to look at her," said Ruth Jacks excusingly. "For my part I don't think she's old enough to be

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a teacher. I'm sure she's only a kid, and not long left college. She's far too juvenile. . . ."

The loud and insistent ringing of the second bell, coupled with the entrance of the Prefect on duty in that cloakroom, put an end to this remark, and the Lower Fifth had to join the long lines of girls marching in orderly columns into the assembly hall for prayers.

It was not till eleven o'clock break that Julia had an opportunity to tell her great idea to the rest of her Form.

"We all agree that we have got to make things hum for the Sterndale," she said. "I have been thinking things out, and this morning a lovely plan came to me bang in the middle of Latin lesson. I almost went off into chuckles on the spot, only I thought better of it."

"Just as well you did," agreed Daisy. "Well, what's the idea?"

The rest of the Form crowded round Julia, as she laid bare her scheme in the low tones of the conspirator. The listeners giggled and nodded heads in agreement with her proposals, whatever these were, and when she had done speaking Ida said, "It's a top-hole idea, but it will want some doing. And if we don't get the psychological moment—well, the thing will be as flat as Holland."

Myrtle laughed. "It'll be anything but flat if we manage it properly, though," she said. "Do you think she will rise to your bait, Julia? It all depends on that, doesn't it?"

Julia nodded her head emphatically. "She will rise, like a fish in wet weather," she said positively. "She is just the innocent sort that never sees a trap, even when it's right under her nose. You will see that it goes off all right. And somehow I feel that she will not be quite so keen on that extra hour after. Now, girls, which day shall we do it?"

There was silence for a second or two, as everyone thought hard.

"We had better make it Thursday. This is Tuesday; to-morrow is folk-dancing, so we can't get that Latin hour in then. We shall have to put in this afternoon, I suppose, and then have things ready for the day after to-morrow," said Joan Roach, who had a decided faculty for organising—or thought she had.

"Got the things, Julia?"

"Rather, all complete. I think that's what put it into my head," she replied, "that, and the Sterndale's thirst for making things real, you know. Of course, that had something to do with it, too."

"Rather!" came in chorus, as the girls moved away to join the throng hastening to the school buildings.

On Thursday afternoon Miss Sterndale, had she been rather more wide awake, might have noticed something unusual in the demeanour of the girls of Form Five Lower, as they took their places for that hated extra Latin lesson. But unfortunately for herself, the new classical mistress at the Morningbury Modern School was, as the girls had guessed, extremely new to her duties. She was a brilliant scholar,

fresh from college, with the highest credentials—on paper, but no practical knowledge of how to tackle a bevy of high-spirited, rather indolent girls. So, of course, she made rather a mess of things, and no one knew better than she did herself, how far from satisfactory her attempts at discipline were.

"Got it all arranged?"

"Julia's going to give the signal, of course?"

"Joyce is going to have five minutes, isn't she?"

"Supposing we have to start translating right away?"

These and other queries and remarks were bandied about in the corridor, as the Form made their way to their own classroom. Of course everyone spoke in whispers, and there was much head-shaking.

"We will, first of all, run through the four conjugations, active and passive," said Miss Sterndale, settling herself at her desk, and ordering the Form to sit and get out their books. "I have seldom met such crass ignorance of the elements of a language as you display," she added, in that chilling, aloof tone, that put everyone's back up. "Now, Rachel Forbes, let me see whether you can give me the Future Perfect of *monere* correctly to-day."

The girl called upon rose and stumbled through the tense. Other girls in turn rose and stammered and stumbled through what was demanded of them, Miss Sterndale waxing every moment more scornful and sarcastic. Things were getting very icy indeed when Joyce Bianco, suddenly attacked with a violent cold in the head, asked permission to get a second handkerchief from the cloakroom.

As she left the classroom more than one girl shot a meaning glance in her direction, and there was an air of tense expectancy about all the Form which a more experienced mistress would have noticed at once.

"That will do. Your knowledge of verbs is a disgrace. We will now try the translation," said the mistress, opening her Cæsar as she spoke. "I have little hope of an improvement here, though. You completely fail to get the spirit of the writing. You gabble over the lines in a meaningless manner. It is not real to you. I suppose you know, do you not, that Cæsar actually existed—walked, talked, ate, and lived? If you would only try to see what you read—to picture it for yourselves—your translations might have a little life about them."

Julia Drummond, who had been rummaging furtively in her desk, now put up a hand.

"Yes, Julia?" the mistress queried.

"My book isn't in my desk, Miss Sterndale. May I ask the girls if they have any of them seen it?" Julia's tone was meek in the extreme—almost deferential, in fact.

Miss Sterndale quite failed to note the excited glances that were directed to the door of the classroom, at Julia's words. She asked, calmly enough, "Has any girl seen Julia's Cæsar?"

A positive gasp of expectancy escaped from the strung-up girls. The cue! It was just what they had planned for! And it might so

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easily have been a failure—the words might have been altered ever so slightly, and so have spoiled the dramatic effect. “Has anyone seen Julia’s Cæsar!”

The door of the classroom opened slowly. No one replied to Miss Sterndale’s question. No one looked at her. All eyes were fixed on the slowly opening door. Then, into the classroom strode with majestic stride no less a person than Cæsar himself!

Of course it was Joyce, whose cold was quite fictitious. The costume was one which Julia’s elder sister had had, a year ago, for an Historical Pageant which had been held in Morningbury, and in which she had taken the part of Julius Cæsar. Toga and everything complete, Joyce strode into the room—her knees wobbling a little, it must be confessed, at the daring of her deed, but determined to go through with the programme. Halting before the desk of the astonished classical mistress, she struck an attitude and declaimed,

“Veni, vidi, vici.”

There was an awful pause then. One hysterical girl, Maud Chilvers, by name, went off into stifled giggles and fled from the room. The distant shouts from the playing-fields seemed louder than anyone had ever heard them before. The far-away rattle of the electric trams seemed like thunder. There sat Miss Sterndale, her face rather pale, but composed; in front of her stood Cæsar, black bobbed hair, olive complexion and gaudy toga all complete.

Would Miss Sterndale ever speak? If only she would say something, or even take her eyes off poor Cæsar! Of course the time was not long, though it seemed an eternity to the guilty conspirators.

“I see. You have a sense of the dramatic possibilities of Latin, after all,” said the mistress evenly, speaking as if such occurrences were everyday events. “I congratulate you all—for I gather you were all in this?” She swept the girls before her with a glance.

Julia rose in her seat, after the manner of Jack-in-the-box. “My idea, Miss Sterndale,” she said, but there was less of pride in her tone than the rest expected.

“Oh, indeed! Yes, naturally—with your name for a cue. But, girls, it was quite well done! If you can manage things so creditably in a bad cause, what do you say to turning the talents you possess to some rather better object? I have a delightful little Latin play that you might get up. What do you think about it?”

The Form were not slow to say what they thought of Miss Sterndale’s idea. They were equally quick to revise their opinions of the mistress herself, as they left school that afternoon.

“She’s a sport, right enough!” said Joyce.

And when, later, the play was successfully given, it was declared that the outcome of the “rag” was better than the “rag” itself.

